

林トモアキ

TOMOKI HAYASHI

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Mismarca Koukoku Monogatari - Volume 01

Chapter 01-03 Part 1

Table of Contents

1. [Mismarca Koukoku Monogatari - Volume 01](#)
2. [Chapter 1-The First Prince of Mismarca](#)
3. [Parts 1, 2, 3, 4](#)
4. [Parts 5, 6, 7, 8](#)
5. [Chapter 3 - The Boy Who Sells Darkness Part 1](#)

Mismarca Koukoku Monogatari - Volume 01



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スミルカ

興国物語

I





パリエル・カール・ライゼ
ミスマルカ王国・近衛騎士

Pariel Karyzel
Knight of the Royal Guards

Mahiro Yukilsneak Edenfalt
The successor to the throne of the Kingdom of Mismarca.



It was a beautiful kingdom. A kingdom entrusted to the prince. A wide townscape, spread before the eyes. Right now, it was a tranquil and peaceful place.

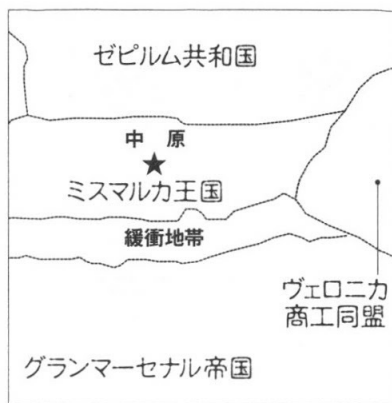


"Let's seize this chance while they are without any famous generals to launch a surprise attack."

Beneath the moonlight floated the smile of the Empire's undefeated War Princess.

Lunas Victora Majestia
Third Princess of the Gran Marsenal Empire

ミスマルカ



C O N T E N T S

第一章

ミスマルカ第一王太子

5

第二章

光輝の麗姫

59

第三章

闇を売る少年

109

第四章

されど王族の心

155

第五章

獅子と蛇

201

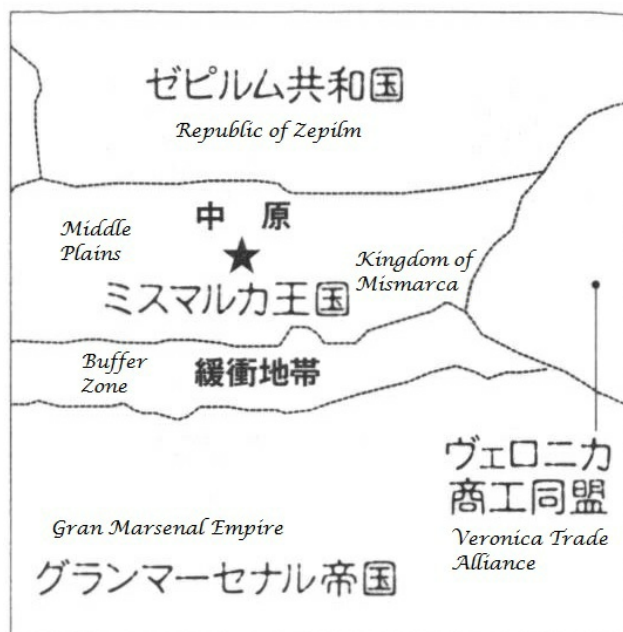
第六章

遙か大陸を目指す

257

あとがき

278



(Forgive my poor Microsoft Paint skills, I just added English to the map)

Chapters:

[Chapter 1-The First Prince of Mismarca](#)

Chapter 2-The Dazzling Princess of Light [Parts 1, 2, 3, 4](#)
[Parts 5, 6, 7, 8](#)

Chapter 3-The Boy Who Sells Darkness

Chapter 4-Within, Still a Heart of Royalty

Chapter 5-The Lion and the Snake

Chapter 6-Towards a Far Away Ambition for the Continent

Afterword

If anyone has any suggestions or corrections to make, post it in the comments.

Chapter 1-The First Prince of Mismarca

Consolidated Chapter 1.

<1>

The continent.

“Prince!”

To the north was the Republic of Zepilm, where humans and Majins live equally. [TL Note: The author seems to use 魔人 (majin) and 魔 (ma, usually mean demons or devils) interchangeably for the race with superior magic powers, so I'm just going to stick with Majins. Especially since there's also 魔物 (mamono), which in this case refers to demons.]

“Prince!!”

To the south was the Gran Marsenal Empire, where Majins are the rulers.

“Prince Mahiro, where are you at?”

Stuck between the two powerful nations, in a place called the Middle Plains, were many small nations, and of these a country smaller than a city existed. It

was a country that will create tremors in the entire continent in the future: Mismarca. Though, right now, it was only a small country where people lived peacefully.

“Stupid prince!”

This was the royal castle. The girl who had been calling for the Prince was Pariel Karyzel, an eighteen year old novice Royal Guard.

“Haa, haa...he's not here...”

She was drenched in sweat after running scatteredly throughout the city, and her throat was parched from shouting so much. Each time this happened, she was not sure where the prince disappeared off to.

Gradually, Pariel was overcome by a great anger.

“Come out here you idiot prince!”

Her loud voice reverberated throughout the wide corridor. Though she looked expectantly at the doors that opened occasionally, those who appeared were only unrelated soldiers and officials.

“Haa, haa...if it's like this...”

Pariel once again took in a great breath of air.

"Prince, come hug me!"

"Yes, my honey!!...oh, it's just Pariel."

The handsome, black-haired youth that suddenly appeared out of nowhere was the next successor to the crown of the Kingdom of Mismarca, Mahiro Yukilsneak Edenfalt. He was 15 years old.

"Where did you come from!? If you could hear me from the start then answer me!"

"Geez, you shouted with all your might in such a misleading and mature voice, what are you trying to do? I am the prince, after all."

"Err, I think there's something wrong with that..."

"Well, it doesn't really matter, I'm busy right now. I'll play along with your childish pranks when I'm free."

"Wait a second, you immature kid."

Pariel pulled violently the prince's cloak.

"You say some really horrible things from time to time, don't you..."

"Ah. No, see..."

The prince then touched her chest. Pariel couldn't keep her coherence as her chest was being fondled.

“Wh...at...?”

“Humph. See. This amount.”

Grope, grope.

“That's why I called you childish.”

“FUCKING PRINCE!”

BAM!

*

“Hey, listen, you. Do you know what it means to hit a member of the royalty? In other countries, it is an act of treason, and means capital punishment, you know? That means the penalty will be extreme. You realize that it would be different from here, right...?”

Well, in the first place, there wouldn't be such a weird prince in those other countries; disregarding this, Pariel only walked oddly behind the prince, her head hanging down, and repeatedly nodded her head while following Mahiro.

“Yes, I really understand my mistake, I'm sorry, I'm really sorry, prince...I just couldn't control myself...”

“Not being able to control yourself, isn't that a cliché used by criminals?”

“N-no, but, um, this, if prince suddenly touches me like that, what am I supposed to think...”

“That, see. Aren't I the prince? Ahahaha. Want to eat some frisk?” [TL Note: Frisks are a popular brand of mints in Japan.]

“No, thank you!!”

Only his apperance. It was really only his appearance. If he kept quiet and looked prim, he would fit quite nicely together with a white stallion, but to the maids, soldiers and officials in and out of the palace grounds, the prince's idiocy and eccentricity was well-known.

Mahiro turned around while putting away a rectangular tablet into his pockets.

“So, what did you want?”

“Er, ermm, right, the king wanted you to have an audience with him.”

“Eh? Father? Then it's all right if I don't go. It's just going to be another of his lectures and speeches.”

Pariel couldn't help but to wonder what kind of an upbringing the Prince had that caused him to become so weird.

“Even if you say that...isn't your father the king?”

“But, really, my father becomes really scary when he's angry.”

“No. That's the same in any household. It's not just in the royal family.”

“Ah, I still don't feel like going. Maybe I'll just pretend that I didn't hear of it.
Yan-pi-kon-pi.”

“What country's language is that? So, we're going now. If not, I'm going to get scolded; now get moving!”

Pariel pushed the prince's back as she walked.

“Isn't it okay to get scolded once in a while? In our long lives, there will be such days. We'll just do better the next day!”

“Do you want me to repeat the same words you just said to you!?”

“No thanks. I'm a timid person, so if I get yelled at I'd want to die.”

“I'm the same, so keep walking. Lift up your head normally! Your crown is tilted, too!”

“That's because you hit me...ow, ow! My neck! I got a whiplash...!” [TL Note: Whiplash is a neck injury caused by sudden jerking movements of the head. The text used this term, so I just kept it.”]

They arrived at the audience hall. The king sat in his throne at the innermost part of the chamber, and before him were gathered all the important people who supported the country.

Despite saying that he was a timid person a while ago, Mahiro remained quite composed as he advanced along the red carpet that stretched across the center of the hall. Pariel parted from the prince, and stood close to the entrance of the audience chamber. She became a novice and started serving in this castle one year ago. This was not the first time that she found herself in such an occasion, but she still could not get used to it.

(Did something happen...?)

The air everyone gave off felt somehow heavy. The hair on her skin stood on edge.

“You're late, Mahiro.”

The king, sitting on the golden throne, said solemnly in a deep, grave voice, and with just that his voice reverberated throughout the audience hall. He was a member of the race called Majins.

“There were many unpleasant occurrences. So, what do you require of me, Father?”

“Only one thing. There are some here who may know of this, but listen carefully. Last night, the Empire...Gran Marsenal resumed its invasion.”

Hearing this, the assembled vassals immediately broke into a commotion.

The principle of the Majin's rule was to use their overwhelming fighting strength to enslave humans, and therefore gain laborers. A mere twenty years after it was founded, the Empire had already conquered the southern half of the continent, quickly establishing its splendor and prosperity, becoming a nation where Majins reigned supreme.

Now, in order to protect the vast amounts of new territories from invasion by demons, the Empire had spread its army and supply lines wide, so it was thought that a second, large-scale invasion would not occur, but...

(A war is starting...)

“Calm yourselves!”

Upon hearing the king's thundering cry, Pariel, and everyone else, managed to calm down. A sudden, overwhelming silence struck the ears of everyone present.

“I understand your anxieties. However, if we were to be shaken by this, then the people will also be shaken by this. What is there for us to gain if we give into our fears? I will depart now for the Republic in order to discuss with the other members of the Anti-Imperial Alliance our future movements. Therefore...”

The king paused before speaking again.

“I will leave Mahiro in charge as acting ruler. I entrust the country to you, Mahiro.”

The hall became noisy as uneasy voices arose again. Mahiro met his father's gaze with some anger . It was an unfavorable situation.

“...Father. Even if you say that, it's too much to expect me to gain victory...”

“Do not be anxious. Who said that you will be fighting a war? Even though I said invasion, the Empire still has yet to make a move. In one month, or at the soonest in half a month, the Imperial main forces will start to deploy, that's the situation. I will return in five days, or a week at the latest. I only need you to take over for me in that time period.”

“But...Father.”

“Mahiro!”

At the king's suddenly severe voice, the prince drew his body back.

“Right now it is still fine. But in the future, I fear that the continent will become a world filled with wars and disturbances. At that time, I will not be here. So, if that time comes, you will become responsible for the well-being of this country.”

“...”

“The military can be managed by the generals. The government can be managed by the minister. But, the ones who stand at the top of the country are still us from the royal family. Do you understand, Mahiro?”

Mahiro faced downwards with a gloomy expression.

“I understand...”

“I am aware of your reputation inside and outside of the country. But, that should not concern you. The problem is that you are not prepared. In other words, you must learn to control your playfulness. If you change yourself, then soon your scandalous name will change as well. I trust that you are aware of this.”

The king shook the crown sitting on his head slightly.



“No, first, you must understand this. A king can never earn the trust of his people by acting like a clown. To put it otherwise, it is the duty of the king to earn the people's trust. So, given this opportunity, this is something that I would like to teach you.”

Mahiro was overwhelmed by the king's powerful gaze. Silence...there was only silence. After looking at his son's reaction, the king lowered his gaze and sighed deeply.

“Only for a few days will you be taking up responsibility for this country. However, if during this time you clear off your name and perform well, and earn even a little bit of trust from the people...perhaps, when I return, I will remove the seal placed on your powers.”

Mahiro, who had been looking downwards, suddenly raised his head in surprise.

“That...do you really mean that, Father?”

“Your powers as a Majin are far too strong. Therefore, when you were young, your powers were sealed. But if you are able to become the king...then there should be no problems.”

Since the king was a Majin, Mahiro obviously was one also. But what was said in the conversation just now was the first time that Paniel had heard of these things. Sealing Mahiro's power...it was probably normal. A powerful magical power, probably enough to rival court magicians or even the king himself, a destructive power, dwelled inside of Mahiro; it was dangerous.

“...I understand.”

Mahir stated.

“Then I will show that I am able to govern this country in your stead, Father.”

That proudly straightened back. That voice without any hints of hesitation.

Perhaps that was the real Mahiro.

That was the first time that Pariel saw that side of the prince, ever since she started attending to him. It was probably the same for everyone else present in that place as well.

<2>

The king was to depart from the castle gates. The king rode aboard a large black automobile of the highest class that was fortified by a magic coating, a legacy of the old civilization. In front of and behind the king shone columns of fully armored silvers, the most elite knights in the country. They were led by four

captains and three generals. Aside from these, there were the Royal Guards, foreign diplomats, and a few chamberlains....

The automobile that the king was in was at the center of the formation, surrounded by chariots and the knights, all from this country whose entire military numbered in the thousands. A country's ruler setting out was definitely not an insignificant matter; many persons of importance accompanied the king.

“Then, I leave it to you, Mahiro.”

“I will take care of it, Father.”

Mahiro bowed deeply towards the king who was looking out of the windows of the automobile. The king nodded once, and then faced straight forward.

“Depart.”

After hearing the order, the maid who was driving the vehicle sounded the horns, and the procession started moving slowly, not unlike a continental train. It took several minutes for the entire delegation to leave the castle gates. The sudden emptiness of the wide foregrounds of the royal castle that was left behind felt a little desolate.

*

“Are you not being a bit too strict with Mahiro?”

In the passenger seat of the car sat the old general who wore a black eyepatch,

looking back over his shoulders. He was Schlevan, the White Mage, one of the king's old friends, and his most trusted confidant.

“Despite his playfulness, Mahiro is not without his virtues. Especially outside the castle, in town.”

“Isn't it good that he leaves the castle often, then?”

The king lightly raised his hand in response to the waving hands of the populace alongside the road. The automobile, a restored relic of the ancient civilization, was capable of moving at a faster rate, but it moved slowly, in order to match pace with the marching army around it.

“He really is a kind person. If he found the maids trying to kill rats or stray slimes in the castle, he would definitely stop them.”

“Heh, this is the first time I've heard of that.”

Schlevan laughed in a hoarse voice.

“If rats appear, then it is proof of the good grains stored within the castle. If slimes appear, then it is clear that the grass is growing well, and proof that the earth is fertile. Hmm, maybe I see his point.”

“Good grief...He's been saying that nonsense forever now, doesn't it ever grow old?”

On this continent, where countless lives, as numerous as the stars, have been

lost, why did someone like him, who could not even allow the killing of vermin like rats, exist? Especially amidst all the political maneuverings and ploys that existed in the royal palace.

“In this world, being a wise king is enough. Being too kind to not even kill a bug...in times of peace, it is a virtue that is worthy of admiration, but...”

“Then, I cannot even begin to wonder why you forced the prince with such a cruel task if he is like this. Well, I wonder how the prince will handle this.”

The old man caressed his long beard, and held back a yawn.

“This is merely what I expect of his abilities. In case that Mahiro really proves to be a big idiot, I left Edelweiss behind.”

“Well, now that you mentioned it, she is there. Well then, the country will be secure, and...”

Schlevan sank his body into the seat, let out a big yawn, and then started to softly snore. The veteran maid seated in the front passenger seat glanced over.

“With all due respect, Your Highness, if there are any problems...”

“If you heard, you should understand. The problem is Mahiro, so I left Edelweiss behind. That's all.”

The maid, while slowly maneuvering the handle controlling the vehicle, let out a troubled sigh.

“That is true, of course. I heard the talk regarding Prince Mahiro, if it is Edelweiss-sama, then...”

“So what of it?”

“A few days ago, I found him sneaking into our changing room, so with the full force of the maid group, we went to beat him u-, erm, um, I mean, to educate him a little...”

“...”

“The cornered prince unleashed out of nowhere rats, cockroaches, wild slimes, our natural enemies...”

“It's fine...I understand now.”

“Then, please excuse me.”

The king imitated the old general by folding his arms and closing his eyes.

*

Mahiro gazed silently, through the opened castle gates, at the procession marching away on the country's largest road until the last ranks disappeared into the distance.

Pariel was the first to speak out of the senior officials and personnel left behind to watch over him.

“Then, Prince Mahiro, what should we do first? Everyone, please wait for the Prince's orders.”

With that, Mahiro turned around to face the group. Everyone had already replaced the shocked, troubled appearance that they usually wore around him with one of honest devotion towards their lord.

“Pu...”

Mahiro spurted out.

“...ha. Mwahaha. Hahaha...AHAHAHAHA!”

“P-prince?”

Hearing this outburst, Paniel grew more worried than anyone else.

“FREEEEEEEDOOOOOOOOM!!”

Mahiro cried out suddenly. He raised his clenched fists high into the air, almost as if trying to pierce the heavens.

“FREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEDOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!”

With that shout, he used up all of his air in his body.

“Haa, haa... Let me say it one more time! FREE-”

Gon. Pariel had reflexively hit him with her clenched fists.

“Prince. What? Freedom, was it?

“I, right now! I have finally obtained freedom with these hands of mine! The unending dream that all humanity desires! In this appropriately democratic country, true freedom!!”

“Huhh..?”

“Father is not here! And all the important generals left with him!...So right now I am...”

Mahiro suddenly cut off his words and thrust his thumb into the air.

“I AM KING!!”

“P...Prince?”

“Hey hey Pariel, I am the king, you know? King! Day in, day out, I'll have no limitations imposed on me! In other words, right now, I have become someone who is emancipated from the pains and toils of labor!” [TL Note: He's using a formal word for “to become”, but there's really no direct English translation, I just put in another word fitting the context.”]

“Is that you using difficult words like emancipated, idiot prince?”

Pariel questioned, but the prince, in his elation, did not hear her.

“Freedom to eat canned mackerel with soy sauce breakfast, lunch, and dinner, three meals a day! Freedom to stay up however late I want to, wake up however late I want to! Ahh, what a wondrous week this will be!!”

“Erm...Your father, the king, did not simply go on a vacation...”

Rather, the king thought he would use this opportunity to force the prince to manage the country and to become wiser. Even he, who knew the prince's nature, probably did not expect such a huge idiot.

“I hereby order you as the king! Officials! Where is the Minister of Internal Affairs, Kalro?”

“Ha, haa...Prince Mahiro, here I am.”

A small man, though quite portly, came running up to Mahiro. Mahiro flourished his cloak with an over-exaggerated motion, and held his hands afloat in the air.

“I order you to gather up all the females between the ages of twelve and thirty-five, dress them up in maid clothing and-”

Blam.

A shock of a magnitude never seen since Mismarca's founding and would probably never be seen again ran through those present in the courtyards of the royal castle

The strange age limits spoke volumes about the seriousness of the prince. At that moment, everyone in that courtyard must have thought that the prince was a genuine idiot.

Why is that? Because I thought the same myself.

“Erm...excuse me, Your Highness, that order...are you serious about it?”

While the minister was flustered by shock, Pariel butted in.

“Prince! Did you not hear properly the king's speech? Stop saying these unreasonable things, you're becoming less and less a proper prince! This isn't the time for jokes! We don't even know when the Empire might invade us!”

“Pariel, did you yourself listen to Father's speech properly? They won't be here until after half a month, right?”

“I know, but!”

If that was really true, then the king would not have entrusted the country to Mahiro. So it meant that the country was still not safe yet.

“Heh. No matter what you say, I'm still the king! After living that long, oppressive life under careful watch in the palace, right now this freedom is calling to me like food does for a starving wild animal! That despotism, oppression, tyranny, those restrictions placed on me, can you find anyone else in

this kingdom who suffers from such inhumanity?!”

It's the end. Everyone immediately thought that the curtain would be brought down over the country's few hundred years of tradition, and it would instead become another part of the Empire.

SMACK.

A sound akin to that of thunder came from the back of Mahiro's head, rending the air and echoing everywhere.

“What's happening here?”

Mahiro, who had fallen to the floor, turned around to behold a single maid, who held in her hands a relic from the old civilization, a forbidden tool used for educational guidance purposes – the legendary slapstick. [TL Note: Kanji is written as 張閃, meaning “flash spread”, but the furigana is given as ハリセン (harisen), a Japanese slapstick used in manzai.]

Uniform, neatly cut black hair. Eyes that were as cold as ice. She was the leader of the maids of this country, and as Mahiro beheld her, he rapidly blinked away the stars that were flying in his vision.

“E-eh? You're here, Edelweiss?”

“Yes. What of it?”

That cold voice. This person always gave off the feeling that she was never

surprised by Mahiro's actions.

Head maid Edelweiss. Whether it were the chamberlains or the maids, this person commanded all of the vassals that served the royal family. Not only that, she also commanded the most elite of knights, the Royal Guards. It would probably be simpler to call her a general instead of a maid.

Of course, she was also Pariel's superior. Luckily, she was Mahiro's arch-nemesis.

“Did you not depart along with Father?”

“No, I did not.”

“Is...is that so?”

“Do you have any last words?”

After seeing Mahiro cower, Edelweiss turned around to address the assembled vassals.

“Have no worries about His Highness. So, let us just await the king's return with patience. Everyone, return to your stations.”

Everyone assembled, who would not have moved even if Mahiro told them to do so, sighed with relief as if a typhoon had just passed by, and obediently dispersed.

Edelweiss was like the very embodiment of discipline in the country. The upholder of public morals.

“Ah..ahhhh. Wait! My ambitions! My dreams! My freedom...everything has...just been scattered...”

Sob sob sob.

“Even though...there was only one piece left...to finish the Pandora's box...”

Sob sob sob sob sob sob.

“That's not something to despair about, is it?!”

“You say that because you don't know how wonderful freedom is....”

Sob sob sob sob sob sob smack.

“Your Highness, you are being very irritating right now.”

What a merciless person.

“Pariel.”

“Ye-yes!”

“You must keep a tight grip on His Highness's reins. You are not his escort for nothing.”



“Ye-yes...but...I've already tried, I mean, I have already attempted to stop him, but it was to no avail. If this continues I might go mad from trying to stop him...”
[TL Note: She stumbled trying to talk politely here.]

Pariel refrained from commenting on Edelweiss's statement. An escort's task was to protect her ward from danger, not to discipline or to teach him. Assigning her such a task was barking up the wrong tree.

“The prince looks pretty sturdy. I will allow a bit of violent treatment as long as he could make a full recovery.”

She really was a merciless person.

“Do you understand?”

“Yes! I understand!”

She bowed.

“Then, Your Highness, please excuse me.”

“...Um. Eh. Ah. Edelweiss?”

“Anything wrong?”

“So how should I act as king?”

“I leave you the freedom to decide what is proper to do. ”

Translation, “I don't need you here.”

Pariel always thought that she would never want to anger this person. To put it in another way, it was amazing, in a sense, that the prince, who gets treated this way every time, was not discouraged from his hobbies.

“In other words, to say it plainly, I'm not needed?”

“Yes.”

“Uu...uuuuu...I...I...I'm an unneeded person...an unneeded king...this...this country...it's becoming a democracy!!”

Sobbbbbbbbbb.

Crying and screaming like someone would from a teen drama, the prince ran off towards somewhere.

“...H-hey, wai-wait up Prince! Princeeee!”

Pariel ran after him.

Edelweiss, who was left alone in the castle, did not smile or sigh, and instead, simply stood there with no expression on her face.

“It's time.”

<This is Kaze Number 1. As we expected, the king left Prince Mahiro in charge of the castle.> [TL Note: "Kaze", meaning wind, is the designated name for an unit.]

<This is Kaze Number 2. The king has left the borders, heading northward.>

“Same as the “Report”, then.”

<Number 1, reporting no change.>

<Number 2, reporting no change.>

“Still, this castle is pointlessly big for such a small country, I've heard that it was as big as the Rottenheim Palace in the Imperial Capital.”

<It is merely a remnant from the time when the Mismarcan Dynasty ruled over the Middle Plains.>

<The Middle Plains were once part of the Republic's territories. It was a huge country then.>

“However, the Republic's king at that time had a few screws loose in his head, instead advocating for democracy and allowing each territory to have its own independence and self-government. Well, at that time, the old civilization had

already begun its collapse. It was the most peaceful time. It was great that countries only had to protect themselves from demons, but...”

<Stop with the pointless tales. Everyone knows how this age came into being. The king had left this country in a flurry in order to negotiate with the Republic.>

<And...that explains this castle. Not only is it an historical relic for this country, it is also pretty much a fortress. It will be hard to attack here.>

“And that is for us, the “Kaze”, to worry about, isn't it...”

<What is it?>

“...Nothing, I was just thinking aloud. There are no problems. Then, our next scheduled check-in will be at one four zero zero. No change reported.”

<Number one, acknowledged.>

<Number two, acknowledged.>

“Transmission over.”

*

“Haa, haa...I finally found you...”

Despite the country's small size, this castle was the largest in the Middle Plains. Pariel always had to painstakingly search through it every time for the prince. Mahiro was standing on the rooftop at one edge of the castle, looking over the

northward part of the castle town.

(Prince...?)

Sometimes, just sometimes, when Mahiro was alone, he would show such a detached face. Despite his fooling around, he still had things he thought about within his mind.

He was gazing at a small street, filled with houses and stores. A protective, outer wall, meant to defend against invasions by demons, enclosed the entire area. At the center enclosed area stood the huge castle, surrounded by ramparts and a moat. Its size was truly massive; one part of the courtyard contained a small-sized forest.

“...What are you thinking about?”

Mahiro was pulled back into reality by Pariel's softly uttered question. He raised his face, and turned around with a smile on his face. Whatever he was thinking was hidden away after he cleared his throat.

“Did you see that wind?”

“...Really, you were just daydreaming again.”

Pariel went to stand next to Mahiro, and together they gazed down at the city. From this height, the town below seemed tiny. But, it was still a pretty scene.

“This is a wonderful country, isn't it? The country that the king entrusted to

you.”

“Well, that may be so.”

Mahiro said cheerfully, and then pouted.

“Do as you like, Edelweiss said? Though that's what she said.”

“Ah...ahhh, that, see, wasn't that just like her? She only acted coldly in order to discipline you who had gotten out of hand.”

“Is that how you think of her?”

“...Erm. To be honest, not at all.”

The Majin, Edelweiss. Pariel had heard that before she became the head of this country's maids, she was part of Gran Marsenal's Special Operations Chamberlain Corps. Pariel did not know why she came to this country, but someone of an inferior position like her would not be told anyway. Edelweiss was a maid, but also in charge of Mahiro's education, and on top of that was also a general. She was such a perfect person.

And she, showing such a perfect disposition for being a maid, was the one who established the current society of maids.

Right now, skilled gladiators, hunters, and performers are all sought after, and those with these skills are offered an extravagant contract, for hiring those with skill are a sort of status symbol for employers. No matter where she goes to, Edelweiss would always be treated as a super high quality maid, and thus would

be offered ludicrous offers.

“But since she told you to do as you see fit, it is definitely okay if you think about the country's well-being and act on it, since this is a rare chance to prove yourself to the king.”

“...”

?

“...Prince, what have you been looking at since a while ago? It can't be that you were looking at someone changing? Though it is probably too far to see from here.”

“...Hey, you, haven't you been really disrespectful lately?”

Mahiro dodged the question with a laugh.

Then, he pointed somewhere.

“That house.”

He pointed at a part of the upscale residential area, where many nobles lived. It was outside of the castle, but still very close to it.

“That house hasn't been purchased by anyone yet.”

“That house with the blue roof? No one lives there?”

“What a waste, isn't it? If I had a little bit more allowance, then I could go buy it. I will buy it! Actually, say, Paniel, won't you come with me to the real estate agent?” [TL Note: Mahiro in this part, and repeatedly elsewhere, often shifts from a royal and formal speech, to casual speech, and back again, and so on so forth. I'll try to differentiate this based on diction and tone of the sentences, since when he's using casual speech, it's usually him messing around.]

“You're living in such a splendid castle, what complaints do you have...”

“Edelweiss is here.”

Paniel sighed deeply.

“Well, if it was bought by other people, then that would be fine with me too. I will just leave in search of another world, my world. And I will establish a country with a doctrine of maids, where everyone aside from me is a maid, and conquer this continent!”

“What nonsense are you saying now? You have to stay in this castle until the king returns at least. Ah, hear that? The church's bell just rang. It's lunch-time now. Let's go eat, let's go eat.”

“Hmm, it's good that Paniel is in good spirits.”

If Paniel left him alone, then Mahiro would definitely waste all of his time away being lazy here. She tugged at Mahiro's arm with a bit of force, leading him inside. Mahiro turned around to look at the house one last time, and then went

into the castle with Pariel.

<4>

For some reason, Mahiro always ate at the general cafeteria, where all the knights, guards, maids and other staff ate, instead of at his own room or at the royal dining room, whenever he had the chance to do so.

Diners picked out food that they liked from the numerous bowls lined in rows on the long table and the counter, and then went to find a vacant seat in order to eat. In other words, it was pretty much a buffet.

People who were captains, high officials, ministers, generals, or held other important ranks could order the things they liked here, and eat in separate, specially prepared rooms. However, Mahiro, as usual, took a hot dog and corn pottage soup at the counter, and was busy wolfing down his food. Mahiro's fondness of canned mackerel was famous inside the castle, as it was something that even commoners would regard as basic and ordinary.

Pariel herself had gotten a croissant with pork saute, a spinach salad, and some bean soup.

“After lunch, we're going to practice sword fighting.”

“Ehhh~?”

Mahiro shook his head with resigned dissatisfaction at this.

“I know that you really don't like practice.”

Mahiro particularly hated practicing the sword. He always spoke of soreness, muscular pain, or other various complaints.

“But, this time you are needed.”

Usually, at lunch time, this cafeteria would always be crowded and rowdy, but now that the king had left the country, it was almost deserted. Sounds of unease and anxiety could be heard in this unpleasant silence from those few who were here, leaving the air feeling heavy and ominous.

“I hope that the king will return soon...”

“Right now, only a skeleton force is left inside the castle. If the Empire invades now, we won't have the strength to fight back.”

“But the king said that it'll be at least half a month before they invade, didn't he?”

“I'm not so sure about that. If they discovered that none of the royalty

remained here, then they might seize the advantage and attack.”

“That's right, isn't it. The main army isn't here, and only one division of knights remain to defend the castle.”

“But, conversely, we who stayed behind should do our best together in order to protect the country.”

“I see. So that means the future of this country lies in our hands.”

“If each of us performs our best, then even the Empire won't easily have it their way.”

Somehow, they suddenly grew energetic.

Mahiro paid great attention to the discussion.

“Pariel.”

“Yes? What is it?”

“It looks like I'm not needed. Not just in leading this country, but my existence.”

“Even if you say it yourself...”

She mumbled.

“Anyway, for me, a prince, savage practices like sword fighting is below me.”

It was like this every time. The prince had a bad habit of being able to fish out sudden excuses and justifications.

“In the first place, I don't need to learn such a thing. Aren't you, my escort, here to protect me?”

Saying that just makes you seem even weaker.

“T-that is correct, but you should still learn how to use a sword, just in case. If such a time comes, you won't even be able to protect yourself...”

“If you could get strong in one or two days, then who would work so hard?”

Mahiro then suddenly asked something.

“And, while we're on the topic, why did you decide to become a knight?”

“Eh? Ah, when I was young, I was attacked by a demon. I was on the verge of dying from my severe injuries, but then someone helped me.”

Mahiro stopped eating and raised his head.

“You don't remember who helped you?”

“Yes. I was playing outside of town with my friends at that time. When I awoke, I was already on top of a bed.”

As she thought about that time, she first recalled the back of the boy she was playing with, and then the worried face of her mother.

Whatever happened during that time was completely missing from her memories.

“So, um, as my life was saved because someone helped me, I wanted to help people, to protect people.”

“...I see. You actually do have a proper reason, huh.”

Mahiro listened with a surprisingly meek face.

“Yes, because of that, I want to protect the prince and everyone in this country.”

“Ah, I see, you couldn't become a doctor because you didn't have the talent to do so.”

“I became an Royal Guard because I had talent with the sword!”

“Hmm~, really~?”

“Ahh! You thought that I was lying just now, huh? That's stupid! Academic

aptitude aside, that story about my childhood was true! Even now, I still have the scars from that time on my back right now!”

“Ah, that I know.”

...

“What is it?”

“Ahahahaha. Why do you know...did you see...?”

...

“I didn't see! Really! I really didn't see anythinggggggggggg~!”

BAM!

“Die you idiot prince! Smash your head in the cadium in this well-boiled tofu soup and die!” [TL Note: This sentence confused me a bit. Had no idea what カド (kado) meant, but I assumed it to be the cadmium (the element), since tofu does have a relationship with cadmium (google it yourself).]

Pariel panted and wheezed.

“Anyhow! Prince!”

“Yes...I won't peek at the changing room or the bathroom a second time.”

Smack. Smack.

“Back to our talk, learning the sword won't let you just protect yourself, you could protect others as well! While the governance of this country is left to Edelweiss-sama, if you take this chance to secretly practice the sword, won't the people around you be surprised? 'That prince?', won't they say? 'At last he's doing something', won't they say? 'After all this time', won't they say!?”

“You, you're just nonchalantly saying disrespectful things once again.”

“An-anyway...! You'll be more well-liked!”

“...Is that really so?”

“Really!”

Pariel said in affirmation. Mahiro stuffed the hot dog inside of his mouth, poured the soup in as well, and stood up triumphantly.

“I see now. It's the opposite of what I thought.”

“...Eh?”

“If Edelweiss is going to take Father's place, then it'll just be just as usual for me. Rather, Father's absence had nothing to do with me in the first place. As you have heard here, it won't even matter if I'm not here.”

“Huuuh!?”

“Then, I'll be leaving for the town.”

“Wai-, Prince!?”

“Don't look for me.”

“No, that's impossible! That's really impossible! But wait, why are you going to the town...!”

“Ostensibly, inspection to prepare for the time when the Empire comes. See ya.”

Mahiro raised his hands in an overly familiar fashion, and left the cafeteria with even, but quick steps.

“Ostensibly!? What the hell is he actually going to do? Prince!!”

Pariel, with extreme haste, gobbled up all of her remaining food, tossed the trays onto the counter, and chased after the prince.

“...That girl is still young, it must be tough on her.”

“She finally became an Royal Guard, only to be stuck with protecting the prince...I'd much rather remain just a normal soldier...”

“She is diligently trying to perform her job, what a nice girl...”

<5>

“It's time.”

<This is Kaze Number 1. No changes in the “rumor”.>

“There are no changes, huh.”

<Kaze Number 1 reporting no changes.>

<Kaze Number 2 reporting no changes.>

“A moat and a wall around the castle; a classic defense. I wonder what place should we attack?”

<We should request an investigation, then.>

“I just sent in a request right now.”

<We, the Kaze, are here in the castle. Isn't the best choice to open the gates from within?>

<Is this castle really such an impregnable fortress?>

<The founder of the old Mismarcan dynasty was the head of the old Majestia family...so, in other words, he is of the same blood as the current Imperial family. That means our magic and our techniques are very similar. I don't know how much power Mismarca has retained, but this castle was built during that age. I saw some unfamiliar crests earlier...they had a bell and a hammer on them. I don't think those are ordinary magical defenses.>

Rustle.

“Hold on...”

<...What's wrong?>

“...It was probably some kid from the neighborhood who got lost.”

<It's an empty house; things like that probably happen from time to time.>

“Wait, where have I seen that kid...”

<...?>

“No way, probably not.”

<Do you need backup?>

“Nay. Let's stop here. This country has good security. We should change locations soon. It doesn't look like he saw me. Then, the next time will be at one six zero zero. Acknowledged.

<Number 1 acknowledged.>

<Number 2 acknowledged.>

“End of transmission.”

...

The kid was leaving by climbing up the wall.

Then, just where did he enter from?

If he had jumped into this garden filled with bushes and scrubs, he would've made a louder noise.

“...Emergency. I need to change my location.”

<As I thought, there was a problem.>

“No, its not such a big issue.”

<Number 1 acknowledged.>

<Number 2 acknowledged.>

“End of transmission.”

*

Mahiro landed a bit roughly on the paved stone street. It was a pretty high wall. He brushed away the dust that gathered on his clothes, disguising him as a common citizen.

“Now, what to do...”

Mahiro adjusted his hat that was dislodged during the fall low over his eyes.

“As expected, the visitor was there, huh...”

Mahiro gave the uninhabited houses a fleeting glance, and was just about to leave when...

“I found you, young master!”

He turned around, startled. Pariel was furiously riding towards him on her fierce, gray horse.

“You already found me?! Ungh, you've been getting good at this lately...!”

“Now, young master, come home and study like an obedient young man!
Oohohohohoho!”

She even chased him into such a street, shouting so scarily.

“Where would you find a home tutor that looks like an adventurer?!”

Pariel was wearing a casual, sleeveless attire instead of her usual collared uniform, brandishing her sword as she charged at him. Anyhow, Mahiro started running away from her.

“I'm currently a free person! Humans, no matter who they are, have the natural right to liberty! Heaven gave everyone equal rights! Someone! Anyone! Help me please! Right now an innocent, young boy's basic rights are being cruelly trampled over!!”

“Oohohohohoho!!”

“Waaaaaa~~~~!!”

Mahiro sprinted with all of his strength, dashing all over the place, trying to escape.

*

And, so, Mahiro was caught.

Clip clop, clip clop. Paniel had put the exhausted Mahiro behind her, and the two rode together on the walking horse.

“Ha...It's bad to run so much...”

“Isn't it because you don't exercise enough? So, you should at least practice the sword a little...”

“Haa, haa, I ran...from the horse...for thirty minutes...isn't that proof enough...of my health...haa, haa.”

Well, that was so, but.

“By the way, Prince.”

“What's up?”

“Why are you riding behind me?”

“What about it?”

“What about it...a guy riding behind a girl is...to be honest, poor behavior, isn't it?”

“Right now, I'm not a high-class young man, so that shouldn't matter.”

“But, still...”

“...Right now, I'm really tired.”

“But...”

“Riding a living animal is very cruel, isn't it.”

“No one thinks that about riding a horse. And aren't you riding one right now?”

“If it's really like that, ride behind me, then.”

“...”

Pariel had a bad premonition.

“Prince...don't tell me you don't know how to ride a horse?”

“To be frank...yes.”

Bam.

“Huhh!?”

“It's okay. Turn left here. I won't escape anymore, so let's return to the castle

together.”

“Turn left...wait, you want to go outside the town?!”

“Didn't I say so? Inspection.”

“...Really?”

Mahiro kicked around his feet.

“Inspection~, inspection~”

“I-I get it! Stop throwing a tantrum like a child! You'll make the horse go wild!”

The town was surrounded by a wall, with various gates allowing people passage. They headed onto the main street, away from the castle, towards the southern gate.

“...What is it?”

This small country had no particular value for traders and other travelers. Therefore, there usually weren't many people entering and leaving the country. But today, the place was crowded and chaotic. The two went closer for a look.

“Out of the way, out of the way! We're closing this gate right now.”

“What's the reason? Tell us the reason!”

“We have orders not to let anyone in or out!”

“My fish will rot!”

“I need to deliver these goods today!”

“At least let me take these medicines!”

“I'm only going out to hunt for a little bit!”

“That's right! What do you mean I can't return to my home?!”

The crowd was grumbling its dissatisfaction and was just on the verge of erupting into a riot.

“Why are they closing the gates?”

“...As I thought, the Empire is coming? That's the captain of the defense squad...”

After getting closer, Mahiro got off of the horse and asked a young guard with a serious face.

“What's happening here?”

“Huh? It's as you see. We're closing the gates now, and will inspect and check everyone leaving the country...Y-Your Highness!?”

Hearing the guard's panicked shout and seeing his pointed finger, the tumult around the gate immediately died down as everyone turned around to look at Mahiro. The captain, however, had a different reaction to Mahiro's appearance.

“Don't tell me you escaped from the castle again...I didn't expect the idiot prince to be here...!”

“Don't say something cold like that. It's pretty mean. This is different from the usual.”

That was because the prince always acted like an idiot.

“It's exactly because of you always doing something like this! What are you doing...? You were supposed to remain in the castle as His Majesty's replacement...well, this gate is the center of attention right now.”

It seems that the captain knew of Mahiro's usual behavior. Inside the station, there were a few simple tables and chairs made out of wood, and several polished shields and spears were propped up against the wall. It was very much so a common guard station. There were several young looking guards inside .

“Ah, Prince! Welcome! Please enjoy. Do you want some juice?”

“Prince, I have some new card games here! Let's play together! I won't lose this time!”

“Prince, do you want some ice cream? Ice cream!”

“Prince, there's this dancer girl at the bar in the downtown's second district that makes you feel so good...”

Well, the guards were being friendly, and really almost overly so...

“Who said that you idiots could take a break?! Return to your stations!”

As the captain yelled angrily, the various young soldiers rushed out, escaping his rage.

“Prince, you seem to know these people really well. And wait, what was that suspicious comment about a bar?”

“E-eh, um, that was, you know, that was a secret message about Edelweiss.”

As Pariel sighed, Mahiro turned around to face the captain with a direct face.

“Leaving that aside, who ordered the doors be closed and caused such an uproar?”

“Yes, it was on orders from the Minister of Internal Affairs, Kalro. It was to prevent spies from the Imperial army from infiltrating.”

“...That was why everyone was prevented from leaving?”

“Of course they weren't told the reason. We can't have a disturbance after what His Majesty said this morning...”

“Then stop this at once.”

At these unexpected words, the captain's and Pariel's eyes grew wide with surprise.

“Why, Prince?”

“Hmm? There's no meaning to it.”

“No meaning to it...we can't so easily...”

“Anyway, if you continue this, there will be people hurt. Fish will rot. The factory over there will be unable to function because it didn't receive today's delivery. And most of all, if that clinic doesn't receive these medicines...”

(By any chance...)

Pariel wondered how this Prince was able to know the lives of the citizens so minutely. The captain was probably thinking the same thing as she exchanged looks with him.

“If some famous, wanted criminal snuck in, then how do you plan on stopping him from escaping? Return to the usual state of alert at once. I order you this with the full authority that Father entrusted me with.”

“Ye-yes!”

“Also, notify the northern gate of the same thing afterwards. Use Edelweiss's name, though.”

“Huh? But isn't this your order, Your Highness?”

“The captain over there won't listen if you mention my name. Even though I'm serious this time.”

“Aha, I see. I understand. Then, I will go immediately.”

The captain departed from the guard station. After the doors were opened, the crowd began to disperse with thoughts of relief. The captain returned, and used the telephone to relay the order to the captain of the northern gate. Chin. He hung up the wall-mounted telephone with a loud clang.

“They said that they will stop inspection at once.”

“Good. That's one thing settled.”

But, Pariel said.

“What if there really was a spy who infiltrated here?”

“It'll be all right. They haven't invaded here yet.”

“That is so, but...”

“Well at least everyone was able to return to their peaceful and stable lives.”

(How should I say it...)

As she thought, the prince actually gave some thought to being a prince. Even though it was supposed to be a normal thing, she felt great relief at this. Even though the prince was always messing around, he was still kind at heart. That was probably why the king said such things, and put such a task on Mahiro's shoulders.

Pariel unconsciously smiled.

“So, the king knew you wouldn't be going out to play?”

“...Well. As you heard from Father, I won't need to do anything special. The retainers will handle everything, so all I have to do is sit on the throne.”

“So, Prince, why did you do that then...?”

“Since I don't have to do anything, it shouldn't be a problem if I use this time to play!”

“It's important that you sit on the throne!”

So, in the end, the two returned together to the castle.

<6>

It was late at night. As usual, Mahiro was lying on the bed in his bedroom, reading a book.

“Your Highness. I am coming in.”

After knocking, Edelweiss entered the room.

“My name was used today, was it not? Was Your Highness unsatisfied with how Kalro was handling things?”

“...”

“All for one fish. One factory. In times of peace, it would be all right, but not at this time. What if the outcome of the whole war is changed because a spy infiltrated today? Please consider the whole situation.”

“Edelweiss, do you know what the “Kaze's Rumor” is? Of course, I mean a specific thing.” [TL Note: Mahiro uses 風の噂 (kaze no uwasa) here. Taken literally it can mean the rumor of the wind, or in short rumor or hearsay. Mahiro states that he does not mean that.]

The maid who seldomly changed her expression narrowed her eyes at this.

“...Where did Your Highness hear of such a thing?”

“There is no way you're not explaining this.”

Edelweis dropped her pretense.

“I am surprised that you discovered them. “Kaze” is the official codename for the most elite in the Empire's Intelligence Division. They could probably sneak into the trapped dressing room easily.”

“I'm confident in my ability to sneak around.”

“But, Your Highness probably shouldn't do something as dangerous as this again. They are known for getting rid of people as quickly as the wind blows.”

Mahiro sniggered at that.

“It will be okay. I'm an unwanted person, anyway.”

“The king did not say those words. Your Highness had only decided that on your own.”

“And that is why I decided to do this myself.”

Edelweiss paused a little.

“Is that so? Then let me ask something.”

“What?”

“What does Your Highness think of the possibility of the Empire invading within the week?”

“They'll come.”

“...The “Wind's Rumor”?”

Mahiro closed his book with a thump.

“Not really. Somehow, they'll come.”

“How do you intend to respond?”

“Because I hate violence, I think I will try to open discussions with them.”

“No matter how kind you are, that would be something impossible to do.”

“...”

“Then, please excuse me.”

Edelweiss bowed, then exited the room.

“...Even though I understand that, isn't there something else we could do besides resorting to violence? That's just what I think...”

No one heard what Mahiro just said. He was alone in his room. Mahiro turned off the lights, and closed his eyes as he sank into his blankets. Because of the bustle earlier that day, he immediately fell asleep.

*

Under the cover of night, a slant-topped carriage slipped into the encampment. Around five hundred black-armored knights knelt towards the pure gold imperial crest of the “Lion in the Moonlight” inscribed onto the side of the carriage.

“It's a bother. Raise your heads.”

Declaring with a dignified voice, a beautiful girl descended from the carriage. While she wore a smile, her eyes glinted sharply. She was dressed in a black male military uniform, her chestnut-colored hair sweeping out behind her back.

The encampment had only been laid out today. The one who was entrusted with the task was a silver-haired, fair-looking young man. Instead of armor, he was wearing a long coat identifying him as a general in the Imperial army, and on his back hung a legendary, famous sword, further identifying him as a swordsman.

As his master's gaze swept over him, he rose promptly, obeying her wishes.

“Princess. You came earlier than scheduled.”

He said these stiff words. But the princess, knowing him well, calmly smiled

and nodded in acquiescence to his words.

“I was free.”

She came to the battlefield just because she was free. It was a statement quite telling of the character of the princess named Lunas. The princess headed towards the largest tent in the camp, which was still being erected. Two maids followed gracefully three steps behind her.

As Lunas started walking, she asked the young general a question.

“So, Reiner, how does it feel, your first campaign as a general?”

“We haven't yet made contact with the enemy.”

“...You're such a boring guy.”

The young man called Reiner kept his stoic appearance even through the princess's teasing. He had no tension. His seriousness was trademark of the “Seeking Sword”, his alias as one of the three Imperial Swords.

“What is the situation over there?”

“Nothing has changed from the “Wind's Rumor” as of now.”

Obviously, the wind he referred to was not the breeze one could feel in the streets. It was “Kaze” of the Imperial Intelligence Division; they “blew” through

the enemy to gather intelligence. Their information was extremely trustworthy, and they were an important asset in any intelligence war.

“As I expected then, they estimated that it would take us half a month to a month to invade them.”

“I see.”

“During noon today, the gates were closed once, but it seems that it was to prevent some criminals from escaping. Right now the north and south gates are wide open as normal again.”

“Hmm. Well, Father, His Imperial Highness, will declare war in two days. Unexpectedly, we have sneaked quite deeply into enemy territory without realizing it, haven't we?”

Lunas said in mockery.

The camp was hidden in a dense grove on the side of a gently inclined mountain. The base had a good view of the target of the invasion: a small, weak country, smaller in size than a city. It stood only a few kilometers away.

A raid force of only five hundred knights had made this infiltration possible. It seemed like a reckless blitzkrieg attack.

“Schlevan, the “Gale”, has left following the king.”

At these words, Lunas suddenly frowned.

“Is that so.”

“What is it?”

“Nothing...I was just a bit disappointed that the famous general won't be here to meet the raid.”

Reiner narrowed his eyes at this. Because of his specialty in swordsmanship rather than in tactics, it was all the more important for him to be aware of the entire battlefield.

“This is war, princess. There is no unfairness here.”

“That's not what I meant. It'll just be boring.”

The Empire was currently expanding its territories, setting out to unify the entire southern area of the continent. She, the third princess, the famous general, known for her valiant courage, was invading other nations for this purpose.

The princess raised her eyebrows at the lavishly decorated seat, which would not have looked out of place in the middle of a ball. However, despite that, her usual fearless smile was gone, replaced by the dark grays of the armor and the shining blades of the soldiers around her.

She felt slightly depressed at her lack of a worthy opponent. It was then that the noises of a commotion from a part of the camp entered the tent.

“What happened?”

“The demons close to this area pose no threat to us and wouldn't cause such a commotion. It must be some bandits.”

As soon as this was said, a knight came running to report, his head bowed down.

“Please excuse my interruption. We have caught someone whom we believe is a spy. What should we do with him?”

“Bring him here.”

As Lunas said this, the knight unintentionally raised his head in surprise, and then looked towards Reiner for confirmation.

It was very unusual. The person who was caught was at most a commoner and of humble birth. There was no need for those from the imperial family to concern themselves with such people.

“If there is a need to question him, then let us go instead.”

“No need.”

Lunas was quite serious, and did not look like she was joking around.

Before long, a man bound by ropes was dragged over. As he saw the flag of the army, the unveiled crest of the imperial family, and finally Lunas, he turned as pale as a dead person, losing his former composure.

“Wh...wh...why is the Third Princess of the Empire...! The Imperial Family, in a place like this...!!”

Obviously, he did not receive a reply. Lunas succinctly asked the vital question.

“Where are you from? Mismarca?”

“Ungh...”

The man desperately started looking for a way to escape. But he couldn't find one. He tried to think of a way to worm his way out of this. But he still couldn't find one. His opponent was the third Imperial Princess, the Sword of Luminosity, who could slay a hundred with one swing of her sword, massacre ten thousand in one battle.

When he finally realized that, he instantly lost all hope.

Lunas watched the man with narrowed eyes in ill humor all this time.

“W...wait! I'm from the Republic! I didn't come here to spy on you guys! I was only passing through! I didn't know you were here!”

Anyone placed in such a situation would panic; it was a normal response. But seeing how he was a spy, he should've prepared himself for situations like this.

“Please have mercy on me! I'll say anything you want me to! I'll defect to the Empire! I can tell you the movements of the Republic's armies, locations of their bases, anything! So please!”

Lunas looked down upon the cowering man, and then spat out a question in irritation.

“How boring. You still haven't resigned yourself to death?”

“...Huh...?”

And that was the last word the man said in this world. Only a second passed between the drawing of the blade and the man's body being split open. Light then flooded forth from the blade in Lunas's hands. And after the light was gone, only ash was left of the man.

The long, single-edged sword had seven gems inserted onto the dull edge. There was a reason it was also called the “Sword of Luminosity”. It was a legacy of the ancient civilization, an artifact, a magical sword with “Seven Stars” crowned on it. Before the light it emitted, not even bloodstains were permitted to remain. [TL Notes: Both Lunas and her sword seems to be called the “Sword of Luminosity”. In addition, 七星, shichisei, meaning seven stars (or can mean the Big Dipper or Ursa Major constellations) was in quotations.]

The knights who saw the spectacle held no sympathy for the man; instead, they were fascinated by the princess's skill.

Lunas sheathed her blade, and then suddenly started laughing.

“Maybe I should've left it to you guys.”

“We probably could have gathered some important information from him.”

“Hmm. Well, it's alright. Aside from that, I'm hungry now. It's late, but let's go eat lunch.”

“With all due respect, Princess, it's not lunch, but dinner.”

Lunas waved her hands in response to the maid's interjection.

“I get it, I get it. Then let's go.”

The two maids who were like her shadows bowed in consent.

“Reiner, allow everyone to drink some wine and to dance. We should increase their morale in preparation for tomorrow.”

“I understand.”

Parts 1, 2, 3, 4

Here's the first half of chapter 2.

Sorry for the lack of updates for...almost two months now. College has been way too overbearing (I definitely overloaded myself this year >.>). I promise to translate a lot during my vacation breaks, especially during Christmas break coming up (whoo three weeks).

Something to be noted is that I am now using the Chinese raws primarily instead of using the Japanese raws. The Chinese translation apparently is at volume 9 already (O.o). I still use the Japanese raws to proofread the translations and to reword what I think is translated incorrectly or lost its original meaning.

This means a few things.

First and foremost, speed will be faster (yay! well, not that you can tell from this belated release anyway heh).

Secondly, I will start to make some arbitrary decisions to reword sentences to what I think flows/feels the best, with the original meaning or intent or purpose or pun *etc.* of the original (Japanese) text.

Thirdly, it'll finally be keeping with the name of this blog =D.

Lastly, I will be releasing on a chapter basis instead of a part basis, so expect half-chapters or full chapters every few weeks instead.

Thanks all for the patience. Enjoy.

#TeamSetsuna4Life

<1>

The next morning.

“When the former Holy Demon Lord ruled over the land...the people from the old civilization greeted the day like this-”

Mahiro slowly walked towards the sun rays that shone into the room.

“ 'A new morning has come! Yes, that's right, a morning filled with hope...!!' ”

“The people from the old civilization must've been really energetic then. Then, Prince, you should dance energetically too!”

Pariel clapped her hands.

Inside the room were several court performers, and a court dance teacher who was acting as the narrator.

Mahiro had these social dancing lessons every Wednesday morning. No matter which country it was, social dancing was an important skill to have. How could someone from the royal family not know how to dance?

“I say, Pariel, you're only an escort, who are you to think that you could you set my schedule? I'm the prince.”

“You already said that yesterday. This is Edelweiss-sama's orders though. I don't dare to disobey her!”

“Telling excuses like this, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Do you get enjoyment from ruining people's lives...”

Bam.

“...Eh? You were here, Edelweiss?”

“Yes, is there anything wrong?”

“Nothing.”

“If Your Highness cannot take over the management of the country, then at least you need to act like a prince”

Bam.

“Like a prince...then, I'm not the prince...? Then...do you mean that...I'm only a body double for the real Mahiro who's someone out there in this world? The shocking truth has been revealed?!”

“Edelweiss didn't mean that! Why do you have such an outrageous imagination...”

“Simply put, I don't like social dancing and stuff like this.”

Mahiro slowly walked towards Paniel, until their faces almost touched.

“Pprince?”

Paniel's heart unconsciously began to beat faster.

“Give me your hands.”

“O-okay...”

“Put your hands on my waist.”

“Okay...”

“Front, front, back, back, right, across, across...Look, isn't this really obscene!?”

Wham.

“Isn't right and across the same thing?! ...And wait, how is this obscene?!?”

“All in all, I just want to dance more soulfully!?”

“S...oul? Ful? Eh?” [TL Note: Mahiro said soulfully in English.]

"And so, I'm going to go to town again..."

Mahiro stealthily watched Edelweiss's face, but her expressionless face, so like ice, had such an intimidating aura far beyond any maid's nitpicking.

"That was what I first thought but.. never mind..."

"Do as you like."

"Yahooooo~!"

Mahiro weirdly cried out, and sprinted out of the room. The performers and the dance instructor breathed out sighs of relief, and started packing.

"E...eh....Edelweiss-sama, is this all right...?"

"What are you still here for? Go chase him."

"Huh? Urm, am I supposed to bring him back...?"

"His Highness plans to stop the Imperial invasion by himself."

Pariel doubted her ears, because Edelweiss was someone who would never joke around. Furthermore, the Empire was not supposed to make a move yet, so what exactly was there for Mahiro to stop?

“If we ignore him, he just jumps straight into a dangerous situation. But, if you stay by his side, he wouldn't be so reckless. So, you have to follow him, and aside from immediate dangers you are to let him act as he pleases. Understand?”

“I...I understand! I will follow the prince, and guard him!”

Pariel hurriedly bowed, and then ran out of the room to chase the prince.

(Eh...What did she mean by that prince saving the country...!?)

2

So, Pariel changed out of her uniform, and switched into a casual outfit much like the one she wore yesterday. She followed Mahiro to the rear garden of the castle.

“Prince, weren't you going outside the castle?”

“Of course.”

Even though this was the rear garden, because of the sheer size of this castle, there was a clearing here where one could go riding or have a small-scale hunt; a small forest filled with sunlight. There was a stable, a stop for carriages, and even a garage where the automobile that the king rode on came from. Mahiro's purpose in coming here was probably to head to the repair area.

A strong waft of machine oil was immediately apparent after they stepped into the huge warehouse. There were numerous carriages and an automobile being

repaired here.

“...Did you come here to rent out a horse, or did you want to get a carriage?”

“That's right, I came here to rent out my favorite horse.”

“I thought you said yesterday you didn't know how to ride horses...”

“In this wide world, of course there are horses I could ride.”

If that was the case, then wouldn't it be faster to just send someone to prepare a horse? It was probably because the prince was used to sneaking out of the castle; this was probably the first time he could walk out so brazenly, so he probably didn't know of such a convenient method.

“Do you want me to have them prepare one for you?”

“Nay, nay...I came here for that.”

Mahiro pointed towards a cloth-covered object placed at the corner of the warehouse. At this, everyone in the warehouse became frightened.

“He's really going to ride it?!”

“The prince is finally going to use that?!”

“Is it really fine if we don't stop him?!”

It suddenly became a chaotic scene.

The head of the mechanics, wearing industrial-grade protection goggles, came over with an apprehensive expression. Pariel often rode horses, so of course she knew him by face.

Older officers like him were all pretty strict and hard to handle, and this person seemed just like a merciless instructor. Especially seeing as how he dealt with iron machinery, not horses, and had the title of the “Stubborn Boss” .

“Prince! Are you really planning to ride this?!”

“YES!!”

Mahiro, in the blink of an eye, gave him a thumbs up.

“The day has finally come, boss!! Are you ready?!”

“Ooh...oooohhhhh, Prince!!”

The head mechanic looked like he was about to beat someone up. Pariel had no idea why he was mad, but he looked like he could easily give the prince a spanking. Just as she thought this--

“Ahhh, I'm truly glad that I chose to follow you, Prince!”

“Huh!?”

Pariel subconsciously shouted.

It seemed like he was actually shivering from over-excitement. He even had to take off his goggles to wipe away his tears of happiness.

“I never expected that I could really see this monster in action...!”

The head mechanic let out a weird laughter.

“The mechanics team has already repaired everything. We're only missing one part now, and that's you, Prince Mahiro!”

“Good! Look, Pariel!!”

Mahiro lifted the cloth covering the object, and underneath was...

“This is my beloved horse...the “Bronco of Steel” ZX-7RR--!!”

“Wait, isn't this a bike?!”

Obviously it was a relic from the old civilization.

Compared to the few Cub class bikes in the shop that could be seen, this bike was far larger. Seeing how huge it was, it must've been stuffed full of parts on the inside.

“Bo...boss, where did you get this thing...?”

“Huh? Of course, it was made from the parts that Prince collected!”

It seemed like he was saying that “Since you're always with him, why didn't you know of this?”

“I actually have a secret mountain of junk. I like to go there to pick up parts, and then buy or custom order the missing parts from the Veronica Trade Alliance...and then!”

Mahiro gestured towards everyone in the repair facility.

“Then I request everyone to put together my machine!”

“Wow...”

Before they realized it, the two were surrounded and mobbed by the machine geeks.

“Amazing...amazing...”

“It must be super fast...”

“It definitely can go at two hundred kilometers.”

“So terrific...”

Chatter chatter chatter.

“Prince, don't be so stingy with this! I want to play with this toy even if I have to kneel and beg for it!”

Chatter chatter chatter.

(So...so scary...!)

Pariel could only retreat backwards in tears.

*

Vrooom!

“...!?”

Pariel reflexively clamped her ears shut at the loud noise from the start of the engine.

Including the noise from the exhaust, the cacophony of noises made the bike seem almost broken. Everything was completely different from the Cubs.

“Ahahahaha!! Pariel, this is the real neighing of a horse! And this beat of the heart! It's truly the union between rider and horse!!”

Vroom! Vroom! Vroom! Vroom! Vroom!

Every-time Mahiro twisted the handlebars, a sound that seemingly reached into the heavens came out of the exhaust. The surrounding mechanics all shut their eyes and were in a stupefied state, almost as if they were enjoying an orchestra of the highest quality.

(Abnormal...everyone here's abnormal...!)

Not only did curious people come to see what the commotion was about, even patrolling knights came in with their lances at ready, thinking that a monster had appeared.

“Hm, only this has the qualifications to be my horse! Let's go, Pariel!!”

“G-go...are you planning to ride this out...?”

No matter what, she couldn't let herself be left behind again. Pariel climbed up onto the seat behind Mahiro, who already had his gloves on, and Mahiro put on his protective goggles.

“It's time for me to rewrite the highest speed record in the Middle Plains.”

“Huh? You aren't going to find a new way to dance?”

It seemed like finding the soul in his dancing was just another excuse. Pariel's comment was completely submerged beneath the shouting and cheers of all the mechanics.

“Nice, Prince!”

“Don't die!”

“Come back alive!”

“Don't die!”

“You can do it!”

“Don't die!”

“Don't die!”

“Hey, why are there so many voices worried about your life?”

Suddenly a safety helmet was put on top of Pariel, who was becoming quite frightened.

“Bos-boss!?”

She only saw a thumbs up from the head mechanic.

“Don't die, young lady! Good luck!”

“Wh-?”

Vroooooooooooooooooooooooooooooom!

“Ahh..aaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Part 3

It actually wasn't very hard to get used to riding on the bike. One would think that they would be faster from the sound they made, but this speed was similar to a sprinting horse. The only difference was that everyone turned to look at them because of the loud noises that the bike made, making Pariel feel very embarrassed to be riding the bike.

After a while, the two arrived at the south gate they were at yesterday. The guards thought that there was an incident because of the sound, so they all rushed out fully armed.

“Ah, it's just the prince.”

“Wow, is that a new machine?”

“Prince, riding a horse is definitely better than riding a machine!”

(I think so too. Horses won't be this loud, and they're cute too...)

Though, Pariel suddenly thought, maybe it was because Mahiro liked the things that others liked. He seems to be very welcome here. He looks like he was very close to the young soldiers here, as well as with the mechanics back in the

repair facility.

(This is the prince's good point..I guess?)

Then, even the captain ran out from the guard station.

“Prince, did you need anything today? As per your orders, we haven't had any inspections ever since yesterday...”

“I'm going to do two things. The first is to bet the name of our knights squadron, and break the speed record on the Middle Plains. The other...”

The bike was loud even when it was parked. Pariel was unable to hear what Mahiro said clearly, but the captain who heard opened his eyes wide.

“...Prince, are you really going to...!?”

“Listen, you mustn't close the gate. Properly convey this to the people at the north gate. If I do not return before sundown, then go to Edelweiss for instructions. Understood, captain?”

“I...I can't accept this, this isn't something that someone like you should just go and do...”

“Ahahaha, let's go, my beloved horse!”

Vrooooooooooom!!

Before long, the prince and his guard faded into the distance, growing smaller and smaller.

“...He really went...”

“What happened, captain? Why do you look so pale?”

The captain stroked his beard and then answered.

“Un...eh, that's impossible...I think the prince was only joking, he said that he's going to scout out the approaching Imperial army...”

“He must be joking. There's not a single trace of the Imperial army around here, and the countries to the south haven't reported anything awry.”

“I-it must be so! After all, he can't go scout out what doesn't exist. Ah, it was because his gaze seemed more serious than usual...”

The captain kept on stroking his white beard, as if he was wiping away cold sweat.

*

“Prince...you really went outside the city! What do you want to do!?”

“If you don't want to come along then you can get off! The hopes of everyone on the mechanics team is on me! How could I return empty-handed!?”

“...Who cares about that! After all, this beloved horse of yours is not fast at all, only loud!”

As they spoke, they left the road.

Mahiro turned the bike towards a distant mountain, and then stopped it.

“Are you done playing around? Then, we can return? This bike is loud and uncomfortable to sit on, my butt hurts a lot...”

“Pariel, you just complained about my beloved horse being slow, right?”

“Ah, I did say so. My Limiel runs faster, and is more comfortable to sit on. Plus it's warm and cute too...”

An unnerving smile appeared at the edge of Mahiro's mouth.

“One hundred and twenty horsepower.”

“...Huh?”

“According to the records of the old civilization, my beloved horse has a total of one hundred and twenty horsepower.”

Hee hee hee.

“Pprince?”

“Too slow? Don't give me that! I was only warming up right now; would you whip a horse that just woke up?”

“O-of course I wouldn't do something so unreasonable...”

“It's the same logic. I need to warm up the transmission and the engine, so I was purposefully riding it slowly. I'm about to use the whip now. Listen, Pariel, don't ever let go of me.”

“O-okay.”

She didn't know what was going on, but the prince sounded so serious, so much so that Pariel just hugged him tightly.”

“Now howl, my beloved horse, ZX-7RR!!”

He started off again.

Pariel thought that Mahiro should at least think of a more appropriate name...

“Eh...?”

Something seemed a bit off.

“Huu-----!”

The pitch of the wind had changed in an instant. No matter how hard you whipped a horse, there was no way that you could hear such a monstrous sound. Even so, this “horse” was still speeding up.

“P...ppppppppppppprinceeeeeee....this bike, right now, how fast is it...!?”

“Only about a hundred kilometers! We're still far from our goal! It's only twice the speed of your horse right now!”

...Now that she recalled, didn't the mechanics say that the goal was 200 kilometers?

(...)

Pariel was on the verge of fainting.

“Ahahaha! We can do it! We can do it Pariel! This thing's too awesome! This is the best thing I've ever ridden! Even at this speed, there are no problems!”

Vroooooom!!

“Waaaahhhh! ...Prince, I get it! I was wrong! It's fast! It's really fast! And wait, the mountain's ahead already! If we keep going like this we're going to crash into it!”

“Nah, that's not it. That mountain is our destination. You should duck and take care not to get your head hit by a tree branch!”

“Really~~~! Aaaaaaaaaahhhh...!?”

The bike rushed into the mountain. Branches and leaves kept whittling by their sides. The uneven ground caused them to bump up and down, and they were almost thrown off the bike.

(So scary, going to die, going to die, going to die...!) [TL Note: I made an arbitrary decision here to separate this from the original paragraph and put it separately as Pariel's thoughts.]

...!

The next second, everything from before vanished. The bike rushed into a meadow in the forest. Mahiro stepped firmly on the brakes, and slid the the bike to a stop.

Pariel opened her eyes to an unbelievable scene.

An army of hundreds of black-armored figures stood in the clearing. In the Middle Plains, none of the countries had any corps that wore such an uniform. After she took a closer look out of curiosity, the armors bore the <Crest of the Lion> of the Empire. Which meant that they were...

(The Imp...Imperial...Imperial Army!?)

The knights also were frozen in shock.

If those who approached were an army, or obviously a demon, the knights probably would've attacked right away. But since the intruders were completely

unexpected, they had no idea how to react.

The two sides were equally shocked.

“Erm...erm...we...we're...”

Pariel was the only one who hastily tried to say something.

If Pariel followed along, Mahiro wouldn't be in danger, she said...

“Edelweiss-sama you liar!”

Too bad that she wasn't here. Cursing had no effect.

“What should we do, what should we do, you idiot!!”

Then, Mahiro suddenly talked to her in a low voice.

“To tell you the truth, I wanted to scout out to see if there was an Imperial scout force here.”

“Ah...? T-then...”

“Uh huh. But, since we were going so fast, I couldn't stop the bike in time.”

Shock.

“We charged into the enemy's camp for such a simple reason...?”

As the two were having their exchange, they were already surrounded by the army of black knights.

*

“What happened? Was that a cry of a demon?”

The knights replied with a bit of uncertainty to Lunas' inquiry.

“Erm, well, we caught some spies...probably not, bandits, maybe...eh, they don't really seem like so either...ah, well, I'm not really sure, we caught two strange people...”

“...Hmm? Well then, let me meet them.”

As Lunas stood up, Reiner interjected.

“Princess, please leave this to me.”

“Don't say that. We have nothing to do until night time anyway. Let's wait until we see them to judge whether it'll be a repeat of last night's events.”

*

There were more people crowded around Mahiro's beloved horse than there were around the two.

“What's this?”

“A bike, you've never seen one before?”

“Oh, so this is a bike? This is my first time seeing one.”

“How does this work?”

“What does this switch do?”

“Let's carve a memento on here with a coin.”

The Empire did actually have relics from the old civilization. Automobiles were used for the transport of large objects or supplies over a long distance, and a bike had little use for them, so it was normal that they have not seen one before.

“Ahhh, please stop, please stop! Don't randomly leave your fingerprints on there, much less carve a memento with a coin! Think of the younger generations, don't destroy things mindlessly!”

(He's actually more worried about the bike's safety rather than his own...)

Of course, Pariel was bound by ropes as well, so she was considering how to escape. Fortunately, the attention of all the soldiers were on Mahiro's bike. As long as she could loosen the ropes, there will be a chance for them to escape...or so she thought.

“Quiet! Her Highness Princess Lunas has arrived.”

After the order shouted by the young man, the chaotic scene quickly returned to order. The black knights lined up quickly, which spoke volumes about the harsh training that they went through. As Pariel wondered what they were doing, an eye-catching beauty dressed in male attire appeared.

Her face was filled with spirit, and her chestnut-colored hair fell to her waist. She even brought high level maids to such a place. Most importantly, when she appeared, the black knights were filled with tension.

The Gran Marsenal Empire's third royal princess – Lunas Victora Majestia.

Her very presence changed the atmosphere around them.

(The Third Imperial Princess, in a place like this--!?)

Lunas, wearing a calm, composed smile, stood before the shocked Pariel and Mahiro.

“These two? You're right, they don't look like spies or bandits. Who are you two?”

Royalty. It was the same as Mahiro bringing a Royal Guard along with him to this place. The only difference was the fact that she brought hundreds of soldiers all the way from the Imperial capital.

“Answer.”

She held in her hands a beautiful sword, with prismatic gems lining the edge of the sword all the way from the hilt to halfway up the blade.

“Ah, eh...we're, this is my young master, and I'm his family tutor...”

Something like this that she would say on the streets to hide their identities would obviously have little effect here.

The blade, almost seeming to flare as it moved, was slowly brought to Pariel's throat. Aside from the feeling of impending death in her, she also felt an odd sense of loss.

“What's there to be scared of, Pariel?”

Mahiro shook his head in disappointment.

“We haven't done anything wrong. Why not tell her clearly?”

Compared to Pariel who was in a stupor and frozen still, Mahiro, despite his hands being bound behind him, drew up his body with dignity and answered.

“Everyone hear this! I am the Royal Prince of the Kingdom of Mismarca – Mahiro Yukelsnike Edenfalt!”

The area was dead quiet.

“Young master?”

“Hahaha, look Paniel. Even though I came alone into their camp, I could scare them with a single sentence!”

Bam!

Despite both her hands being bound, Paniel subconsciously gave a reverse roundhouse kick to the back of Mahiro's head.

“Okay, young master, is your mind clearer now? You're in the presence of Her Highness Lunas, who bears such a name to herself. Introduce yourself again correctly.”



Mahiro could only squirm on the ground after being disciplined by Pariel, who turned on her high level teacher's switch.

“Y...yes, I was wrong. Actually, I am Mahimahi, King of the South Seas, I apologize for any disturba-geh.”

“All in all, young master has a severe case of mental disorder and vivid imagination...so...”

It was hard to believe. After she said it, she had trouble even believing herself. Pariel thought that she must have angered the princess, and lifted her head slightly to peek, only to see the princess smiling.

“Did you think I would believe that?”

Pariel immediately thought that “Of course it didn't work”...but looking carefully, Lunas was talking to Mahiro.

“Heh heh, did you believe that you would live longer if you called yourself the prince? You should consider what you say more carefully.”

Well, there was the possibility of being taken as a hostage if he were to say that. Of course, there was also the possibility of immediate execution.

Lunas turned to ask the young general.

“Does he seem like a prince?”

“Definitely not.”

An instant reply.

“How about a spy?”

“Impossible.”

“Hmm, I think the same.”

(Un...unbelievable...)

It seemed like they wouldn't believe him because he seemed so stupid.

Well, honestly, as a prince, it definitely seemed weird for him to venture out alone, and not to mention that he was punished with a kick to the back of the head. He even changed his name to Mahimahi. He had none of the princely grace that was expected of a prince.

Ahh, if she was an outsider, she wouldn't even consider the possibility that Mahiro was a prince...

Lunas looked over at the bike.

“So, what were you doing with this?”

“I wanted to establish a record for the fastest speed on the Middle Plains.”

Because Mahiro spoke of such unusual things, Lunas had some trouble understanding him.

“The fastest speed...establish a record? What use does that have?”

“That's easy. Mismarca has no special industry or produce. But, if I establish a record for the highest speed here, then it would prove the might of Mismarcan

mechanics and of its scientific might, and would spread the fame all over the continent. So, after that, countries would come to Mismarca for repairs, modifications, or even for building entirely new automobiles. After that...famous and skilled mechanics would come from all over the continent. So, Mismarca would finally have its unique industry that no other country could match. We could match, no, even exceed the technologies of the Far East and the Veronica Trade Alliance.” [TL Note: I made an arbitrary decision to combine two paragraphs here since it seemed awkward.]

It was amazing that Mahiro could easily spin such a tale of lies.

(Sigh...it seemed that he had a lot of practice in his everyday life...)

Anyways, after Mahiro's speech, not just the black knights, but even the princess was moved. The tension in the air slowly faded.

“Hmm..so, you mean, you're part of the mechanics?”

“Nay, I'm not a military officer; to be specific, I am an outside subcontractor. Monsters like this bike, there aren't many people willing to test them out.”

Since they came this far, might as well as rely on the Prince's lying skills. He was a genius at it, if he could keep his calm and speak so naturally while surrounded on all sides by enemies. It seems that idiots had their strengths in unusual situations.

Lunas looked deeply at the bike, and then, smiling, said.

“Ahhh, you said that this little thing was a monster? Between it and a horse,

which one is faster?”

“Of course the bike is faster!”

“Ohhh? What about comparing it to a truck? Our army uses them regularly for transport, and they could easily exceed one hundred kilometers on flat ground! You mentioned speed record, what kind of speeds were you talking about?”

“Our goal is twice of that speed, two hundred kilometers.”

As Mahiro said that, everyone was quite shocked. The princess let out an expression of disbelief.

“For real? It couldn't really be that fast. Two hundred kilometers were the attack speeds of dragon knights! What if the bike crashed at that speed?”

“Then of course you would be turned into meat mush.”

Mahiro said nonchalantly.

“Even falling from a horse would result in heavy injuries. And unfortunately, I don't know how to use magic, so I can't erect magical barriers or things like that.”

At this, even the <Sword of Luminosity>, infamously fierce, felt that Mahiro was unbelievable and reacted a little cutely, having a sweat drop on her temple.

“Something's not quite right. Why did you come up to this mountain that is

filled with trees? If it were really that dangerous, then wouldn't somewhere with less obstacles be better...?"

“Something with wheels is different from a horse. It goes even faster down a slope.”

– So I climbed up a mountain.

So it was only because it was faster to go down a slope.

“““ ...”””

Mahiro wore such a radiant and simple smile that left others speechless.

Parts 5, 6, 7, 8

Here's the second half of the second chapter. Done with finals, yay. Finally done with quantum physics. I hated that class with a passion. So time consuming and difficult. I won't miss you~. I'll try to finish volume 1 before New Years, but no promises. Aso is on vacation, so I may have some mistakes, as always post in the comments if you see something.

Also I'm back to J->E now, glancing every now and then at the Chinese raws. They're terrible. Mhmm.

Enjoy.

5

“Seeing is believing...Let me show you the power of this machine. Someone untie my ropes for me.”

Lunas, staring in disbelief, nodded her acquiescence, and the ropes binding Mahiro were quickly untied. He mounted the bike with an expert motion, and then turned just half his body to look at Pariel.

“Hey, Pariel.”

“Eh? Y-yes, Young master?”

“Have you heard of the story 'Run, Melos!'" [TL Note: See [here](#).]

.....

“Wait, why are you looking at me with such a direct gaze? Are you planning to escape!? Are you planning to leave me behind and escape by yourself!? You bastard, get yourself down from there right now!!”

“Don't worry, don't worry, I'll be back, surely! Melos definitely came back for his friend!”

“Melos did actually go back for his friend, but you're obviously Mahi! Princess! Princess Lunas, this bastard definitely plans on leaving me behind and escaping! Tie him up again!”

The two started arguing and shouting.

At the actions of the two, not only did the surrounding knights start laughing, even Lunas let a burst of laughter.

“Haha, ahahaha! I get it I get it...hey, untie the other over there.”

At this, the young general raised a quiet protest.

“Princess. If you do that, then those two will...”

“That's exactly my intention.”

“The enemy will know of our movements, then.”

“So what of it? Mismarca's remaining force only consists of five hundred soldiers. I can handle them myself.”

Lunas said that. She then added.

“Besides, I'm interested in this youth. For the sake of his country's progress, he was willing to sacrifice his very life. Is that not very heroic of him?”

“I feel the same, but...”

“...Anyway, though it may be cruel, but regardless of what happens, this country will face its ruin tonight.”

Lunas said this with firm conviction in a voice that held no shreds of sympathy. What entered the ears of each person present was only the strict truth. Silence returned as the loud and rowdy atmosphere that was created by Mahiro's and Pariel's quarreling instantly vanished.

This meant that the army here was no reconnaissance force. The Empire truly planned an invasion with just these troops. With these troops, armed with what was boasted to be the best equipment on the continent, this was no simple bravado.

In the first place, Mismarca only had five hundred soldiers remaining. Pariel, as a swordsman, believed the princess when she said that she could handle everything by herself. During the expansion of the Empire in the south, she set an even more astounding record for herself. It was seriously said that she had the worth of a thousand knights.

“...Though, come to think of it, if we fight such a weak country that is Mismarca, then you probably will be forced to fight too. It would be a shame if I had to kill you.”

?

“When you go back, tell this to your cowardly prince. If before sunset he comes here and surrenders to us, then I will spare his life.”

The clever general let out a grimace at Lunas, who was enjoying herself. For her who was so blessed by heaven, this was probably her only shortcoming.

Mahiro replied.

“I understand. Then, we'll be off.”

Really, did he truly understand? A normal person wouldn't even be able to smile in this situation. Regardless, this was not the place to bring up such a moot point. They should hurry back to the castle and report this situation.

After being untied, Pariel went to sit behind Mahiro.

“Let's go back, Pariel. Edelweiss will be mad.”

Lunas, after hearing Edelweiss's name, suddenly seemed to remember something.

“Then we will take our leave, Princess Lunas. In memorial of today's meeting with you, let me show you the true power of this thing.”

Then-

“Ahh!?”

The bike's front wheel dangled in midair as it underwent a sudden, extreme burst of acceleration. This was a feat that could not be matched even by legendary horses. The bike flashed past the knights through a hole in their formation, leaving behind only a huge roar, and vanished into the trees in the forest.

“P-p-prince! What should we do!? At this rate Mismarca will...!”

“What to do!? Isn't that decided already!!”

The prince had a reliable smile on his face as he turned his body to look at Pariel.

“Prince...!?”

“I will now become the Chuck Yeager of the Middle Plains! Two hundred kilometers, here I come!!” [TL Note: Chuck Yeager was a US Army Air Force test pilot who was the first person to officially break the sound barrier.]

The bike was going even faster than when it was climbing up the slope.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh~!!”

*

“How was it?”

Lunas asked. One of the knights that she sent to the base of the mountain to observe the bike reported to her excitedly.

“Yes, that bike...it was like that young man said, it was a totally abnormal speed...! By the time we reached the base of the mountain, we could only see a trail of dust and smoke, and they had already reached Mismarca!”

“Was that so? Hmm. Very impressive. Okay, you can leave now.”

After bowing, the knight left the tent.

Reiner held back a sigh, and asked Lunas.

“...Princess, do you really plan on waiting for him?”

“What of it? We will still depart at the agreed upon time. It would be alright if the prince shows up before that time.”

Lunas then scoffed.

“But, he won't be coming. Besides, it would be unpleasant to meet with that coward. He's probably the same as those idiot aristocrats that Father introduced anyway.”

“Luna-sama, please be mindful of your words.”

The maid standing behind Lunas interjected.

Lunas sighed in irritation.

“All in all, I like that young man called Mahi or something. His name was weird, but he was quite brave.”

“ “ ... ” ”

No one had anything to say to that.

“...However, huh...”

Lunas suddenly stopped talking and gazed at the paper on top of the desk.

“What is it?”

“Hmm. It was so enjoyable watching those two that I forgot that Edelweiss was here. I might've just made a mistake.”

6

“...Ah!?”

When Pariel awoke, the bike was already inside the ash-colored warehouse. Mahiro was nowhere to be seen. She thought that she was still clinging tightly onto Mahiro, but she was the only one left here.

“Huh!? Huh!?”

It wasn't a dream. Somehow, it seems like that she was still alive. It was almost night by the time that she exited the warehouse.

“Prince!? Prince Mahiro!?”

Pariel walked towards the center of the castle, yelling out Mahiro's name and asking passerbys his whereabouts as she walked along. Well, even though he was an idiot prince, with the Imperial army this close by, even he wouldn't...

“Prince!”

Pariel headed to the cafeteria after asking some soldiers and maids. She found Mahiro sitting in his usual place, complaining about something.

“I...I'm such a chicken.”

He took another bite of his chicken legs.

“Chicken like this teriyaki chicken. Only a little bit more. Only a little bit more...and I could've reached the 200 kilometers an hour benchmark!”

“Don't say that, Prince...”

“Yeah, yeah, you already became the first person to reach 190 kilometers per hour in the Middle Plains.”

“Were you using the usual mountain for a boost of speed? It's already really dangerous to go a hundred kilos even on the flat plains!”

“Ahh, but still what a shame...”

Surrounding Mahiro, who was recounting his tale of glory, were those mechanics from the maintenance warehouse, as well as ordinary soldiers and maids...wait.

(...Why is everyone so relaxed?)

After all, the Imperial army was already right under their noses. If

everyone knew this, then they wouldn't be here chatting and enjoying themselves with such a peaceful atmosphere.

(...Don't tell me that he was so engrossed in sharing his tale that he forgot to tell them...?!)

“Hey! Chef! Chef, my tankard is empty! Get me another one!”

Mahiro said, and then a reply came from within the kitchen.

“Prince, if you drink anymore, you'll poison your body, you know?”

“Then get me some dried fish! Make me something called dried Japanese anchovies! What I need the most now is calcium! I need some calcium to make sure that I won't crash into the ground when I go over two hundred kilos, and come back unharmed! I'll turn this failure into motivation for my next attempt, and with the calcium I can turn the handlebars all the way to maximum acceleration!”

The chef sighed lightly, and poured the tankard full of milk before Mahiro's vacant eyes, and then returned to the kitchen to make dinner.

“What are you doing Prince!?”

“Hmm? Pariel? Can't you see? We're having a consolation meeting here.”

“This isn't the time for that, isn't it!? Did you already forget about the

Imperial army that we saw on the mountain!?”

The people around them, hearing these words, were startled.

Inspite of that.

“...What kind of dream did you see, Pariel?”

“Huh?! You're the one who's dreaming!!”

“Seriously, who's the one who fainted behind me, tearing up, drooling and who knows what else.”

“There weren't anything else! Only tears! And no that's not the point...”

The atmosphere around her suddenly chilled, and she was pierced by several icy stares.

“E-eh, huh...? But...”

“Listen, I'm not my father nor my brother. Do you think I would return alive if I rushed into such a dangerous place by myself?”

Mahiro wasn't acting as he normally did, seemingly neither lying nor joking. Well, even then, he shouldn't be saying something like this with such flair.

“E-eh? H-huh? Then I was really...dreaming?”

“Hey you, no matter how young you are, you're still a knight...don't joke around like that, you know? You almost scared us to death.”

“Yeah, even though Prince Mahiro is good at running away, if he met the Imperial army even he wouldn't come back alive.”

“We had a hard time pulling you off of the prince in the garage, you were holding him so tightly...”

“Come to think of it, maybe you're the reason that he couldn't reach 200 kilometers, with you riding behind him and all. How much do you weigh?”

“Actually, maybe it was the prince being kind enough not going full out out of concern for you.”

“If it's that then oh well. That's one of the prince's good points. That's why we can't bring ourselves to hate him even though he's always so stupid.”

“It's also the same for us maids and housekeepers.”

“Mhm, mhm. If we caught another guy peeping at us, we would charge him money, but if it's the prince, then all we would do is punch him two or three times and toss him into the Connolitto River, mm.”

Ahahahaha.

Aside from Mahiro who turned pale at the last remark, everyone else calmed down and relaxed.

“No, even with her, I should've been able to broken two hundred. I have no intention of using Pariel as an excuse! It was all because I lacked guts!”

The sun had fallen without them realizing it, and it was time for dinner. The majority of the people who just came to the cafeteria were here to hear about the recounting of the prince's challenge. Mahiro was gradually surrounded by a large number of people. There were people who offered comforting words, people who said that he'll do better next time, and even those who complained that they could hear the explosive noises of the bike from inside the castle. Because Mahiro had the freedom to do as he wanted today, Pariel was able to see how he gained the trust of his vassals.

Seeing this was enough, Pariel thought. Despite his imperfections as a prince, Mahiro was still able to garner such loyalty from those around him. What he said about testing out the bike for the mechanics and their plans when they were caught by Lunas...now that she thought about it, it might actually be true. Unexpectedly, Mahiro might actually have the best interests of the country in mind.

Despite the festival mood here, Pariel had to hurry to report what happened earlier, so she was about leave from here.

“Anything wrong?”

“Ah? Edelweiss-sama! I have something to report! Something very important to report!!”

Pariel left the cafeteria with Edelweiss, who looked as she always did to some place where no one was around. There, Pariel related everything that happened today to Edelweiss.

“...So we should hurry and close the gates, and raise the defenses in the castle...”

“Is that the prince's command?”

“Huh? It's not, but...”

“Then there is no need for that.”

“Edelweiss-sama!”

Pariel didn't give up so easily.

“His Majesty has already informed me what happened when you two went into the mountains. The part about Princess Lunas, too.”

“T-then, why...everyone inside the castle, why are they so nonchalantly...?”

“His Majesty ordered me not to tell anyone else.”

Pariel didn't understand.

“Does....does he mean to surrender Mismarca to the Empire?”

Edelweiss didn't bat an eyebrow at this, but merely raised her index finger to her lips. It seems that Pariel was speaking a bit too loudly.

“Pariel, consider this. If you ever become a general, and receive orders to command your soldiers to attack a castle...”

Pariel thought that right now, it wasn't very likely for her to ever become a general.

“Y-yes...”

“What would you do if you found that your enemy wasn't prepared at all for battle, their defenses lacking, and their gates open?”

“...I would attack them before they finished preparing for battle.”

“Naturally.”

(Then why ask?)

This was something that even a child unfamiliar with warfare or swordsmanship could answer.

“But what would you think if your enemy didn't react even with your troops right in front of them, with no preparations for battle and with their gates

even wide open?”

“Eh? Um. Then, I would...”

Hesitate. Feel that it was unbelievable. Suspect that there was a trap.

“Unless there was an idiot defending the country, anyone would feel the same.”

“Wait, but, there actually is an idiot defending this country right now!”

“Pariel. Don't say something like that about your master.”

You said it yourself! Ah, but this person's master was the king himself, so maybe it was okay that way. Must be good~.

“Then, conversely, if a well-known tactician was known to be defending the castle?”

“...It must be a trap then. But such a person...”

Pariel was half-finished with her sentence when Edelweiss pointed to herself.

“It's time.”

<This is Kaze Number 1. No changes reported in the castle and the town.>

<Kaze Number 2. The defensive gate has not been closed. No communications have been observed.>

“No changes in the “rumor”?”

<Kaze Number 1 reporting no changes.>

<Kaze Number 2 reporting no changes.>

“...What does this mean? Was that not reconnaissance, after all?”

<I wouldn't call charging into the middle of the enemy's camp reconnaissance. Only a kamikaze attack or just pure suicide.>

<But, they returned home without doing anything...maybe they actually were lost and wandered in by accident?>

“ ... ”

<...>

<...>

“...Wait a minute. The girl who was riding in the back is calling out Edelweiss's name.”

<What is she calling her for?>

<I don't understand her reason for doing so.>

“ ... ”

<...>

<...>

“Then...what does this mean? Were the princess's words not even conveyed?”

<I wonder. Though the bike returned to the castle, we still don't know what's happening inside.>

<What if this incident had something to do with Edelweiss?>

<...It's a trap.>

<It's the only possibility.>

“As I thought...”

<If it was the royal family, then it might've been out of love for the people, but if that woman is in command then it's out of the question.>

<If she received the command to protect the country, she would do so even if she had to raze this peaceful city to the ground.>

“...I understand. I will report this possibility to headquarters. Next report is scheduled at two zero zero zero. No change reported.”

<Number one, acknowledged.>

<Number two, acknowledged.>

“Transmission over.”

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“...And so that was what the “Kaze's Rumor” said...there hasn't been any changes in the town.”

The soldier who was reporting in seemed a bit perplexed. The soldiers who followed military decorum to the letter were thrown into confusion. The troops were ready to move out at any time. However, despite it being past the appointed time, Lunas has yet to give such an order.

Then, she said with some slight self-mockery.

“I still feel like going in alone...though I know I would be playing right into Edelweiss's hands.”

She paused for a bit in indecision.

“I'll postpone the invasion for now.”

What she said after her deliberations shocked everyone.

“Princess...”

Reiner began to voice out everyone's thoughts.

“Heh, even though I'm like this, I'm still a general. You guys are all cute. I wouldn't hesitate if you guys could die in honest and fair battle, but since Edelweiss is involved, it's not unlikely you could be killed some other way. Let's observe for a day or two more.”

“But, the king wouldn't consider making a mere maid a stewardess. Inept as he may be, the prince is still left behind, after all. If she was behind the commotion this time, then what reason was it for?”

Hearing Reiner's inquiry, Lunas smiled.

“Of course it's to crush us.”

“Crush us?”

“I think the Kaze might've been right in their predictions. The open gates are an invitation to a trap...she might be planning to use the citizen's panic in order to launch her assault...or she might be planning to lure us into the castle. If it's Edelweiss, then she would definitely be considering something charming for defense.”

“Would the Prince of Mismarca allow that?”

“She's someone that would do it even without his permission. Reiner, you're from the Imperial Guards, you should know the <Noir Rosen>, right?”

“The Imperial Special Servants Team?”

Reiner naturally looked towards the two maids standing behind Lunas. Lunas nodded in confirmation.

“Correct. Those two are part of them, as well.”

“But, what do these maids have to do with combat?”

Lunas seemed to have already completely given up on attacking tonight, as she ordered the maids to open up a cask of sake.

“If they're around me, then they must be pretty capable. Want to have a spar with them? They're pretty strong, you know.”

“No, thanks.”

Though the princess was joking around, she never rated military prowess lightly. What she said was probably true.

“But if they're serving as guards, then there's already the Imperial Guards.”

“Oh, that's right, you're part of them as well. Well, you're a male, would you accompany me even into my bedroom?”

Reiner seemed to have forgotten this point, Lunas read from his expressions. She continued on.

“They are raised, covered by the shadows of the Imperial Guards, as the royal family's secret weapons. Those of the Imperial Guards learn how to protect the royal family, but the girls of the <Noir Rosen> learn the hows and the ways to kill someone.”

The Imperial Guards would guard against enemies.

As long as they could stand firm as an iron wall for but one or two seconds, the <Noir Rosen> would strike from a completely unexpected angle, taking them by surprise from the back.

Of course, the Imperial Guards were very capable themselves. Each and every one of them were very skilled swordsmen. Ninety-nine percent of all enemies would perish by their hands. But, against the one percent, just as a precaution...the <Noir Rosen> would serve as the final defense.

One of the maids interjected with a smile.

“You speak too highly of us, Princess. We're not as capable as you make us out to be.”

All the other commanders gathered there felt their hairs standing up at that cold smile. Lunas, on the other hand, found her response delightful, and started laughing after gulping down a cup of alcohol.

“Well, as you can see, they're pretty scary. You guys probably shouldn't test them too much, for the sake of your health.”

“Then, is Edelweiss also from the <Noir Rosen>?”

“No, she's not. She's actually the one who proposed the concept to Father, and founded <Noir Rosen>. If someone with that mentality is in

charge of defending the country, then sacrificing a few hundred civilians would be simple for her. In the first place her personality is horrible.”

The two maids behind her were nodding their heads in agreement with a strict face, though no one had asked them anything.

“This invasion force was handpicked from the most elite of the capital defense forces. We could handle one or two assassins.”

Lunas seemed to have thought of something, and showed a rare face of weariness, as she looked at the unrelenting Reiner. She began swirling sake in her cup.

“About that, Reiner...What I'm troubled by are her extraordinary powers as a Majin.”

Majin. Those born with innate magical power in their bodies, and are able to use magic without using spells or crests. No matter whether it was their vitality or their lifespan, they were far superior to humans.

Lunas, part of the Imperial Family, Reiner himself, all of the knights gathered here, the two maids, everyone here were Majins.

But, different from humans, Majins varied greatly in power. The innate magical energies of different Majin had vast differences. Lunas, who was able to match a large number of enemies by herself, has an extremely powerful innate strength. To give Lunas pause, just how strong was this Edelweiss...?

“Even if we took advantage of the confusion the civilians would create, and successfully charge into the castle in the confusion...we only have five hundred knights. Reiner, what would you do?”

The silver-haired general appeared to have already accepted Lunas's words. But, without any pride, he said calmly.

“I would kill them all.”

Lunas nodded, somehow satisfied, and gulped down her sake.

“You're a boring and uninteresting guy in conversations, but your strength lies in your swordsmanship and your sharp eye. Reiner, go reflect on this later. Carve what I said about Edelweiss into your heart.”

“I understand.”

8

“However, I do not want my name to be used in this way a second time.”

Though she said that, she didn't seem to really mind, watching the neatly cut plants in the courtyard under the moonlight. Pariel grew shocked after

she registered what Edelweiss said.

“Then...did the prince calculate everything up to this point...?”

“I don't know.”

Edelweiss said.

“But...I just want to confirm, the enemy general is Princess Lunas, correct?”

“Eh? Uh, yes...”

“Then there will be no problems. Her Highness, for the better or for the worse, is a typical general. She's not a brilliant tactician, nor is she someone who charges in blindly and idiotically. If the situation does not change, then they will postpone their invasion for now.”

Listening to such an analysis made Pariel even more aware that this person was someone who was formerly from the Empire.

“But...what about afterwards...?”

“I don't know. Maybe the king will return early, or maybe the prince has some other plans.”

“...If neither happens...then what do we do?”

“Then I will do something. Anyway...”

Edelweiss turned around.

“...What I said just now, don't tell anyone else. His Highness does not want anyone to fall into a panic.”

“...So that was why he's doing this by himself?”

So that was why he went to such a dangerous place, by himself?

“To be honest...though I have been taking care of the prince ever since his birth, I am still not certain whether he is a genius tactician wearing the mask of an idiot...”

Edelweiss seemed to be lost in her memories, and looked towards the night sky.

“...Or if he is just an overly kind idiot who is constantly saved by luck.”

She was always strict, so her words when she criticizes others were strict, even filled with thorns.

“But...his kindness is something that's for sure, at least.”

“Do you feel motivated now?”

“Ah...y-yes...though it's a bit embarrassing...”

Everyone understood the prince's kindness but her, even though she was the closest to the prince, she didn't understand his good points...

“From now on I will serve the prince with everything I have!”

Edelweiss said with an expressionless face to the Pariel who said such words with a smile.

“Do so. But, if he really is just an idiot, then I won't be held responsible.”

Why was this person always so cold? Pariel couldn't help but think this.

Chapter 3 - The Boy Who Sells Darkness Part 1

Hi everyone. Long time no see. Here is the first half of the third chapter.

I'm kind of dead? Stuck between work, school, life and Phantasy Star Online 2 haha. Honestly, don't expect very much from me now. I lost a lot of motivation to translate, and only do it on whims now. If anyone is interested in helping me with translations or willing to pick this up from me, feel free to contact me. Otherwise, I'll just proceed at the snail's pace I've been doing this at haha.

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The next morning, Mahiro gathered the remaining officials in the war room. Since so many of the important officials were missing, half of the seats around the large, round table were left vacant. In attendance instead were young, inexperienced captains and anxious high officials who did not usually attend these types of meetings.

Not to mention that they now know what happened yesterday.

"Pariel, are you serious!?"

"Those weren't just the Prince's babblings?"

"Tell me those were lies, Pariel!"

(Why are they all saying these things to me...)

It was obvious that these high officials did not trust Mahiro. In the first place, Mahiro had never come to this conference room before, so this meeting felt very

weird and out of place.

The only ones calm amidst all this chaos were the Internal Minister Kalro, futilely trying to calm those around him down, the steel-faced Edelweiss, and...

"Quiet down! You are in the presence of His Highness Prince Mahiro!"

The one who shouted in a loud voice was the Prime Minister, Cayenne. He was an intrepid young man, not quite thirty yet, who wore his black hair back in a knot and sported a monocle over one eye.

He was a genius who had studied politics at the university of Republic's capital, graduating there at the top of his class. Everyone had expected him to hold high office in the Empire, if he was a majin, and even if he was not, at least become a high official in the Republic. However, for some reason he had come to this tiny country in the Middle Plains.

"P-Prime Minister, did you already know of this...?"

"Edelweiss-sama had already informed me of this last night."

But then why were the city gates still not closed, and why was there still no preparation for battle? To answer that question, Cayenne repeated what Edelweiss had said yesterday. Everyone seemed to accept this, as, after all, dawn had come and still the Empire has not invaded yet.

However, Cayenne was still not finished speaking.

"Still, we can't wait here forever. Since the Imperial forces are planning to launch a surprise attack, their spies must have already infiltrated the castle town. After they determine that there are no traps, they would once again resume their invasion. Even if they do find traps, they are running out of time."

The king had left the country yesterday with many soldiers accompanying him,

so Mismarca's defenses were greatly weakened. There was no way that the Empire would miss such a perfect chance.

Cayenne continued with a bitter expression.

"Even if we start conscripting soldiers right now, we would not have the time to train them. Since other countries in the Middle Plains are faced with the same shortage of troops right now, there is no way they could afford to send us reinforcements. So that leaves us with but one path; gather what volunteers we could from the citizenry and guard this castle to the death."

Guard this castle to the death.

Just as Cayenne's words spread waves of unease and trepidation...

"I dislike violence."

Mahiro declared.

"So I am willing to sacrifice everything in order to prevent the people of this country from being harmed."

There probably was no one who found anything wrong with that, given how serious and sincere the prince seemed. Cayenne nodded his head to the prince's words.

"Then let us gather the troops at once, and inform the citizens that-"

"Though I said that, I think that it's acceptable for humans to hunt animals. I want to eat delicious steaks and have wild boar hot pots. It's also acceptable to use violence to drive back the demons. In order for humans to secure their living places, to acquire essential resources for their livelihoods, violence is an important tool. But..."

The look in Mahiro's eyes suddenly changed as he raised his face to look at everyone present there.

"...I cannot accept violence being used for humans to fight other humans. We are different from animals or demons. Why must we, who possess consciousness and the ability to communicate with others, hurt each other? This is the only thing that I cannot accept."

The officials began to discuss amongst themselves the unusually solemn and powerful speech that Mahiro gave.

What the prince said was undoubtedly correct. But, this was not the time for such naive thoughts.

Cayenne caught a glimpse of what the prince planned to do from his unnecessarily strong words.

"But, even if you think thusly, Prince, I do not think that you could have such a conference with Princess Lunas, who knows only of martial matters."

That was so. Though Lunas had said that she wanted to meet the prince, that was only for the purpose of asking him to surrender. A discussion would be a completely different matter. In the first place, what would be the proper place to hold such a conference, and what would they prepare as bargaining chips for such a discussion?

The Prime Minister severed such a path of action.

"We have no cards that we could play against the Empire. Besides, the Empire will be invading with the violence that you mentioned earlier. As such, what other response could we mount but resistance with force?"

Mahiro, though, still was unrelenting.

"Soldiers are still people. Father has entrusted this country to me. And it was Father who taught me that a country belongs to its people. I will not let anyone in this country be harmed."

Cayenne sighed.

"Then...what do you propose?"

"I'm thinking of setting a trap."

Mahiro, who had returned to his usual demeanor, said something astounding once again. Everyone, including the Prime Minister, became dumbfounded for a moment.

"In the first place, they're not attacking because they suspect a trap, so why not let us really set a trap during this time? If it's a trap, then the people wouldn't get hurt. Well, at least the Imperial army will be in for a painful experience."

Cayenne let out a deep, deep sigh.

"That won't solve the root of the problem here. The reserve troops are the real problem here."

"Reserve troops?"

"They only have around a few hundred knights. If they were able to hide in that mountain, then at most they will number around a thousand. Invading a country with that small amount of troops is way too lacking, even if it's a small country like Mismarca."

There were numerous mutterings of agreement and understanding at the Prime Minister's words.

"...In other words, what you see before you, Prince Mahiro, is the vanguard of

the invasion. If the surprise attack proves successful, the real invasion force will come in and suppress the country, that is probably their real objective."

"Ahh. I see, hmm. That's right."

"Then...let's set traps all over that mountain, or how about an unreasonably large trap."

"This is no longer on the level that could be dealt with by traps. That is what I believe."

The Prime Minister started to get a bit impatient.

"Still, as with anything, if you don't try, you won't know. Maybe they got this close only because they planned this surprise attack. Didn't Father even say that it will take some time before the Imperial army could move? All I have to do is to defend this castle until Father comes back...is that not so?"

Mahiro laughed a bit by himself, then raised both hands, palms facing upwards, and said frankly.

"Anyway, I really will not go to war. Actually, if I were in command, wouldn't we lose a war that we otherwise would win? Is that all right with you?"

In other words, a threat.

A heavy air began to settle over the space in the strategy room.

"If so, then I order a surprise attack right now! Of course, I'll be at the spearhead. I'll ram and kill Princess Lunas with my beloved horse! No, seriously. Wait, is that really all right? If there are no objections then I will sortie right now."

""Objection!""

"I...I understand, Prince..."

Even the Prime Minister broke out in a cold sweat at this and gave in. He usually dealt with the king, generals, and high officials, and did not have much contact with stubborn people, so dealing with Mahiro, whom he was unused to, drove him to total exhaustion.

Even though there were quite a number of important officials left in the country, Mahiro was still the one who was made the steward of the country. Well, this was probably the dark side of this royal kingdom that prided itself on its liberalism.

Cayenne straightened his monocle that was dislodged.

"Being patient until the King returns...those words have their own merit. But, Prince...what kind of traps are you planning to set?"

"Hahaha. Look at this!!"

Bam! Mahiro slapped on the table a single notebook.

"This is the greatest secret of my secrets. The Trap Datapack!"

Everyone present went "Huh?" at this.

"Its motto is 'one trap a day'. In here are the records of strategies and of how to continually trick and deceive people in and outside the castle; that's the sort of relic it is."

"Isn't that something bad!?"

Pariel shouted out subconsciously. Probably because she had fallen into a hole from these traps before.

"That's how it is. Well, in this castle right now, the only person that hasn't fallen for one of my traps is probably Edelweiss."

"...Wait, even the King?!"

"He got really angry that time..."

Mahiro let out a big sigh, but his spirits quickly returned.

"But, after so many hardships, perils and experiments, at last, this! Against those pig fighters from the Empire, these traps will be successful a hundred times out of a hundred tries; rather, a hundred falls into a hundred holes! I'll turn you guys into pork nabe! Anyway, this is the enthusiasm we need, right?"

"Just having enthusiasm is no good!"

Pariel said, but Mahiro only let out a laugh.

"And so, everyone, let's get to work setting traps. The details are shown here."

With a rustling noise, Mahiro next took out a map of the castle. Actually, looking closely at it, it was a map of the town around the castle. After looking at it, someone voiced out an objection.

"But, Prince, if there is any large movement of soldiers in the town, the people will panic. Considering that, such a large commotion will..."

"That won't be a problem. I racked my brains for something fun like this. This will be the preparations for a festival!"

Festival? Everyone furrowed their eyebrows at this.

"Yes, a festival! I've always thought that it sad that there's only the harvest

festival. Now it is the time to ask the people this!"

"Erm, but, eh...what does this have to do with traps?"

"If it's a festival, then the people will naturally think nothing of it, and will help set decorations in place...and the so said decorations will, in truth, be traps."

Ooooh...sounds of comprehension and admiration spread throughout the meeting room.

"I see, that would solve the problem of lack of manpower, wouldn't it?"

"And, also, the Empire won't be suspicious, thinking that we were reinforcing our defenses, since we'll be setting up for a festival."

"Ohh, this would be killing two birds with one stone. As expected of the Prince, you're a master at clever little things like this!"

The kind Internal Minister, Kalro, commented so.

"When Your Highness ordered everybody in the nation to put on maid uniforms, I was so worried!"

"Since we haven't used up all of our money, we must as well as spent the rest on traps. And I didn't say I wanted everybody in the nation to put on maid uniforms, only every female between the ages of 12 and 35. If a guy tries to wear it, then I will mete out punishment with the jeweled sword that's handed down in the royal family!"

"Don't mention that again!"

Pariel hurriedly stopped the prince, who was becoming more and more excited.

"Ehh. Then, here's that. Here are the blueprints for the various traps."

He took out more and more technical blueprints.

"On the surface, these look like they're decorations. Even the craftsman and the people who set these won't be able to tell the difference; that's how intricate they are. But, careful timing and coupling, in order to maximize the power of these, are needed, so we need to consider their placement. Though it's not quite as binding as ryanhan in mahjong, but let us aim for at least a three hit combo, yes!"

Mahiro raised a thumbs-up.

"Anyway, in order to find more materials for making traps, I'm going to make a trip to town."

He stood up.

"Cayenne, Edelweiss, I leave the rest to you two!"

And ran away.

"Wait, he's leaving again!? Hey! Wait for me!"

*

After Mahiro left, the meeting was adjourned.

"Edelweiss-sama."

Cayenne walked alongside Edelweiss as they left the strategy meeting.

"What?"

"What exactly is the Prince thinking of doing?"

"No idea."

"What are you planning to do, Edelweiss-sama?"

Edelweiss raised the map in her hand in response to the question.

"I'll send out the maid team."

"Is this really all right?"

Cayenne looked at the map that he held in his own hands.

"I don't know. But this is His Highness's orders. You and Prime Minister Kalro may command the soldiers aside from those in the maid squad as you wish."

Cayenne replied in a low voice as he walked alongside Edelweiss.

"If you were to confront Princess Lunas, wouldn't all of this be solved?"

"You must be joking."

Though she said that, there was not a single trace of a smile on Edelweiss's face.

"When I was studying politics in the Republic, I had heard of a woman capable of assassinating an entire squad of knights. By herself."

"You speak too highly of me."

Edelweiss's face did not budge in the slightest. This person probably would not change the expression on her cold, beautiful face no matter who died in front of her.

"...It may be over-thinking on my part, but perhaps you have other plans,

Edelweiss-sama?"

"Think whatever you may."

Again, the unchanging facade. She did not budge even under his suspicions. There were no traces of anger, or even of anything at all.

"I follow only what His Highness dictates, and do everything in my power to act as he says. That is all."

"...If that is so, then it is all good. Forgive my disrespect."

She was someone who held no inherent loyalty towards this country, but who instead was someone hired with money. It was for this reason alone, if nothing else, that made her motives simple and clear.

"Think nothing of it. But if this is about His Highness, then even I at times don't understand what he's thinking."

That was to be expected, though. The prince's stupidity was on a completely different, incomprehensible level, even when compared to this woman who showed no expressions towards anything.

"But, 'the country belongs to the people', was it? At least Prince Mahiro's dedication towards the country is real."

"Yes."

Edelweiss confirmed.

"That, at least, is not to be doubted."

"But, from my perspective, he's still being far too kind."

"I think the same. The world being the world it is. Even the King, on occasion, has lamented about this."

Edelweiss parted from Cayenne, leaving for the headquarters of the maid team, while Cayenne went towards the headquarters of the military.

2

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Today was the same as yesterday. The two disguised themselves, then headed to town. They went through the northern gate which was connected to the castle, and arrived at the central plaza. This plaza was the largest plaza in the town, complete with a fountain in the middle. Even though this was the heart of the town, it was especially lively and active today, more so than usual. Considering that a festival has just been announced, however, this was probably normal.

"I didn't think that there would be commotions for a festival at this time!"

"Even the idiot prince can think of good things once in a while! Makes me look at him differently!"

The citizens who knew nothing of the situation merrily prepared for the festival. Among them, the carpenters were especially busy, sawing and shaving wood and standing them up. With a cursory glance, there was nothing but preparations for the festival all around, with arcades and gates being set up and lamps being made.

Then, according to instructions from the soldiers, the finished objects were transported to the main road that ran north and south. This route was undoubtedly the route that the imperial army would take as they begin their invasion.

"Hurry! Since this was the idiot prince's idea, the king would definitely stop this once he returns!"

"Let's hurry and have our fun while the ogre is away!"

And everyone's motivation was filled to the brim.

"Are they complimenting or insulting me?"

"W-well, Prince, look, at least everyone is having fun!"

And then, a huge shadow appeared behind them.

"...I see. The Prince always wanders out of the castle like this, huh?"

"Ah, Cayenne-sama..."

Pariel turned around and found the monocle-wearing prime minister standing behind them. Even though he usually sat in the castle and directed matters pallidly, for such important tasks he came out to personally lead at the forefront.

"Hey Cayenne. As expected, you finished your work early."

"Your praise honors me. Though this is not really my specialty..."

This person was similar to Edelweiss. Inside the castle, he always had an impervious barrier around himself. Watching him make a troubled face and scratching his head was oddly charming.

"Well, why don't you use this chance to get yourself a tan? You'll get popular! Popular with the ladies, you know!"

"Really, Prince, there's nothing I can do with you...But, speaking frankly, I was doubtful of this plan succeeding but..."

He stretched out the map that Mahiro had given to him in the war room, and then started matching it to the scenery on the streets.

"It wasn't until the operation had begun that I realized that, somehow, this was a rather reasonable plan. It was especially clever to use the festival as a pretext. If we use this opportunity to prepare for war, then the people would not be suspecting these movements."

In this small country, it was easy for citizens to find out what was happening. If they found out, even if they were in support of resisting, they would still harbor some doubts, and eventually fall into despair.

But, right now, moving around merrily in the central plaza, everyone's spirits were high. Everyone's eyes shone with energy, whether it was the men who were working on the construction, or the women who made and delivered pastry and tea to the men, or even the children, fighting with each other for a chance to help the adults. Everybody was excited at this sudden festival. The preparations proceeded very rapidly.

"I never would have thought that Prince Mahiro could be such an excellent tactician."

"I don't like being praised by others, so I have nothing to give to you for that."

Though he said that, it was obvious that the prince was wriggling with pleasure.

"Hey, about this, if you want you could touch these."

Bam!!

"Stop randomly pointing at people's chests! And what are you saying!?"

"Hahaha...no, Prince, I was sincerely admiring you. Also, the ambush in the mountains, did you also predict that...did you know of it beforehand?"

Mahiro massaged the bump below his large cap.

"Even for my esteemed self, that would be impossible. But now that I think about it, if someone were able to infiltrate so close by, then that mountain would definitely be the best spot for them. It's just that I sometimes go to that mountain since I have a test course on it."

"I see...then, it's still my fault as prime minister to have been so lax with security, isn't it..."

In reality, even though the one ruling was the king, the ones who handled most of the tasks were the high officials. But the one who advised the king and approved the actions of these officials was indeed the prime minister. This was comparable to the relationship between the general and his officers in an army.

"Don't think too much into it; Edelweiss even said that governance is your specialty. Worrying about this now won't change anything."

"Thank you for your reassurance. It seems like the people were right when they said that you have a kind heart."

"Ahh, don't praise me so...if you'd like you can touch th-"

Bam!

"...My head hurts, so I think I'll be leaving first..."

"Hahaha, please take care."

Mahiro waved his hands, Paniel bowed deeply, and then the two headed off to somewhere. Cayenne stared at the backs of the departing two.

(A tactician, huh? Is Edelweiss helping him secretly? Or is it...)

"Prime Minister, sir, the south gate captain reported some issues with the

decorations near the gate..."

"I understand, everything here should be fine. Let us depart for the south gate.
Call a carriage."